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ABSTRACT

This paper, the fourth of a series, covers the impact of the Workers' Educational Association (WEA) on the field of adult education in England. The content is presented in four sections. The first one briefly covers the origins of the WEA. Section 2, a review of WEA's founding principles, concentrates on the objectives of working class participation, university standards, and democratization and the problems which arose in attempting to embrace them. The third section, on aspirations in practice, reviews the history and impact of the WEA from 1903 until after the Second World War in 1946. Section 4 covers what effects the developments in a changing society from 1946 to 1976 had on the WEA movement. This section along with the third one comprise two-thirds of this paper. The fifth section discusses the present and future prospects of the WEA. And section 6 assesses the impact the WEA has had on its community and advises in a cautionary tone what its present and future priorities should be if it is to remain effective in the realm of adult education in England. (EM)

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A Publication in Continuing Education
Syracuse University

Burton Blatt, Dean, School of Education
Alexander N. Charters, Professor of Adult Education
Doris S. Chertow, Director, Publications in Continuing Education

THE WORKERS' EDUCATIONAL ASSOCIATION

Aims and Achievements

1903 - 1977

by

Roger Fieldhouse B.A.

(Lecturer in the Department of Adult Education and Extramural Studies, University of Leeds.)

May 1977

Syracuse University

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Foreword

It must be several years since I approached Dr. Sidney Raybould to write about the Workers' Educational Association as a Landmark in Adult Education. Dr. Raybould was admirably qualified for this task because he had first-hand experience as a leader in both the W.E.A. and the University of Leeds. He was fully cognizant of the forces in society which caused the creation and development of the W.E.A. and the influence that W.E.A. in turn had on society. Dr. Raybould was also able to appraise the impact of W.E.A. in countries other than Great Britain. To top it all, he is a remarkable historian and writer, especially renowned for his narratives on Adult Education and on cricket.

In any case, after many discussions and after a bout with poor health, Dr. Raybould decided that he could not complete the document. As was typical of him, he had an alternative. He suggested that Mr. Roger Fieldhouse should write the Landmark. I concurred with Dr. Raybould on condition that he would consent to be a continuing contributor and critic of the document. Dr. Raybould graciously concurred and fulfilled the task admirably.

Mr. Fieldhouse accepted my invitation mainly because it was Dr. Raybould's wish. As the document bears witness, however, Mr. Fieldhouse recognized that W.E.A. is indeed a Landmark. With the ability of a true historian, he has carefully given us this important contribution to the field of Adult Education. As I reviewed the plan of organization and the sections as they were sent to me, I became increasingly interested in the W.E.A. I expect that many of our colleagues will likewise find the study informative and interesting.

A final note -- it seems fitting that this publication should have been written by a faculty member of the University of Leeds. A conference held at that University was the last international event in which Sandy Liveright participated. The Landmark series is one small way to reflect on the great contribution of Sandy Liveright to Adult and Continuing Education.

Alexander N. Charters
Syracuse University
May 1977

Preface

In 1975 Professor S.G. Raybould was invited to write the fourth paper in the "Landmarks and New Horizons in Continuing Education" series, on the contribution and impact of the Workers' Educational Association in the field of adult education. The W.E.A. has played an important part in the development of adult education in Britain during the twentieth century, and to a lesser extent in some of the old British dominions, but it will be less familiar to most Americans. It was most fitting that Professor Raybould should have written about the W.E.A. as a landmark, in a series "where all the essays should be first hand." He has exercised a profound influence on the development of the Association both through his extensive writing (not least, his controversial book, The W.E.A.: The Next Phase in 1949) and also as a W.E.A. tutor and later as Head of the Department of Adult Education and Extramural Studies at the University of Leeds from the time of its establishment in 1946 until his retirement in 1969. No one was better qualified to write this paper, but unfortunately ill-health prevented Professor Raybould from doing so. In stepping into the breach, I can only claim a dozen or so years' experience of the W.E.A. as a tutor and member, but I have been able to call upon the wider experience of Professor Raybould, who has kindly offered me his advice and criticisms and access to his library and papers.

I also wish to express my gratitude for help and advice from Professor B. Jennings of the Department of Adult Education at the University of Hull, who has undertaken a great deal of research into the life of Albert Mansbridge and the history of the W.E.A. and whose books on both these subjects are to be published shortly; Mr. G. Brown of the Department of Adult Education at the University of Nottingham, who is currently writing about the motivations of W.E.A. students; Dr. D.W. Crowley, Director of the Department of Adult Education at the University of Sydney; and the District Secretaries of the Berks, Bucks and Oxon, Eastern, North Staffordshire, North Western, South Western, Yorkshire North, Yorkshire South, South Wales and North Scotland W.E.A. Districts for their helpful responses to my requests for information. I am also grateful to Messrs. J.P.M. Millar and J. Lowe for permission to consult their manuscript, History of the National Council of Labour Colleges, to be published by the N.C.L.C. Publishing Co. Ltd. soon.

Finally, I must acknowledge an outstanding debt which sadly can never be repaid, to Mr. G.F. Sedgwick, who was District Secretary in Yorkshire North for thirty-one years from 1945 until 1976. In that time the W.E.A. faced numerous crises and criticisms, but Fred Sedgwick

resolutely defended the highest values of the Association both in Yorkshire and nationally, and also found the time to teach them to me during the twelve years we worked together. When he died in September 1976, the W.E.A. lost a great adult educationalist. He read and approved the first three sections of this paper: I hope and believe he would have agreed with what I have said about the past thirty years and the future.

Roger Fieldhouse, B.A.
University of Leeds.
January 1977.

Abbreviations

C.J.A.C.	Central Joint Advisory Committee on Tutorial Classes (founded in 1910, dissolved in 1958)
E.P.A.	Educational Priority Area (five E.P.A.'s were established in Britain in 1968 following the Plowden Report on primary education, 1967)
H.M.I.	His (or Her) Majesty's Inspector of Education
L.E.A.	Local Education Authority (i.e. that part of the local government system responsible for the provision of education)
Min.	Ministry
M.P.	Member of Parliament
N.C.L.C.	National Council of Labour Colleges (Marxist orientated adult education organisation, established 1921, wound up in 1966)
N.S.W.	New South Wales, Australia
T.U.C.	Trades Union Congress
U.C.A.E.	Universities Council for Adult Education (established in 1947)
W.E.A.	Workers' Educational Association
W.E.T.U.C.	Workers' Educational Trade Union Committee (founded in 1919, wound up in 1966)

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(1) The Origins of the Workers' Educational Association

The Workers' Educational Association (W.E.A.) emerged in 1903 from many strands of nineteenth century adult education, too numerous for adequate description in this short paper. The most important of these were the Adult Schools, Mechanics Institutes, Working Men's Colleges, Trade Union Schools, the Co-operative Society, and the University Extension Movement. During the eighteenth century the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge established a number of evening schools for adults, to enable men and women to read the scriptures. The Adult School Movement, with the same objective, began in 1798 when William Singleton, a Methodist, and Samuel Fox, a Quaker, opened an Adult School in Nottingham for Bible reading and instruction in writing and arithmetic. The movement spread rapidly to other parts of the country, mainly through the efforts of the Society of Friends. During the first half of the nineteenth century the schools retained their almost exclusively religious characteristic, but the movement was revitalised in 1852, broadening its educational purpose and making a more liberal contribution to adult education thereafter.

The Mechanics Institutes, which originated in Glasgow in 1799, were similarly intended for those who had had little or no schooling, but their emphasis was on scientific and technical rather than religious knowledge. By the mid-nineteenth century, there were over 600 Mechanics Institutes in England alone, with a membership of more than 100,000. But they had become mainly middle class, and their educational provision was drifting increasingly away from serious and systematic courses to be replaced by popular talks and entertainments.

The Working Men's Colleges came into being partly because of the failure of the Mechanics Institutes to attract significant numbers of working men to genuinely educational courses. The first college was founded at Sheffield in 1842, but the most influential was the London College, formed a few years later. These colleges provided fairly elementary and practical instruction, but they also aimed to equip their students to shoulder more social, economic, and political responsibilities. From the 1840s onwards, several trade unions also began to run schools or classes for their members. Although some of these shared the wider objectives of the Working Men's Colleges, they were primarily concerned with the technical subjects related to their members' trades.

A more liberal approach to adult education was adopted by the Co-operative Societies, formed after an Equitable Pioneers' Co-operative was established in Rochdale, Lancashire, in 1844. Many of the societies decided to devote 2.5 percent of their profits for educational purposes. At first, this money was spent mainly on the purchase of books and papers for their members, but came to be used also to support lectures and classes. In the later part of the century, some of the societies became involved in promoting University Extension lectures. The University Extension Movement was formed at Cambridge in 1873 and spread to Oxford five years later. The aim of the movement was to promote university lecture courses in extramural centres for "the whole Nation." Provision expanded rapidly, to a peak number of 574 centres in 1891/2, which included many centres where the universities worked in conjunction with the County Councils under the Technical Instruction Act of 1889. This work virtually disappeared after 1895, leaving approximately 200 University Extension Centres by the beginning of the twentieth century.[1]

It was against this background that Albert Mansbridge, a Co-operative Wholesale Society worker, proposed at the Oxford University Extension Summer Meeting in 1899 a closer alliance between co-operators, trade unionists, and the University Extension Movement. His proposals added little if anything new to the debate on the failure of the Extension Movement to reach the working class, and were couched in such aggressive terms as to annoy many of those present who had been wrestling with the problem rather longer than he. However, he returned to the theme more tactfully in the Spring of 1903 in three short articles contributed to the University Extension Journal, advocating the formation of a joint committee of the University Extension Movement, the Co-operative Movement, and the Trade Union Movement, which would expand the university extension work already being done with co-operators and promote such education more widely among trade unionists and the working class in general. By May 1903 the idea had crystallised into a firm resolve to form a new association to make the benefits of university education available to the working class.[2]

Mansbridge and his wife became the first two members of the "Association to Promote the Higher Education of Working Men" (renamed the Workers' Educational Association two years later), and the new organisation was, at least symbolically, founded. A provisional committee, or Mansbridgean "stage army" consisting of trade unionists and co-operators, met at Toynbee Hall

in the East End of London in July 1903, and a month later, on 25 August, the new Association held a conference at Oxford "to consolidate itself into a special movement," in the words of Robert Halstead, co-operator and former weaver from Hebden Bridge. Mansbridge emphasised the absolute necessity for the Association to become "in distinct and immediate relationship equally with the Universities as with Working Class Movements." District Committees were established in southwest and northwest England and, in October 1904, the first branch was founded at Reading, followed by others at Derby, Rochdale, and Ilford in the early months of 1905.[3]

The W.E.A. had survived its infancy and was on its feet. It continued to grow, as will be outlined below. First it is necessary to consider the basic principles upon which the Association was founded. Mansbridge pinpointed two of these at the Oxford meeting in August 1903 when he spoke about the distinct relationship with both the Universities and Working Class Movements. The Extension Movement was already offering university learning to the general, non-university public; while the nineteenth century history of adult education abounds with attempts to cater for the working class. The unique contribution of the W.E.A. was to combine these two objectives, so that the provision of a university education for working class people became the overriding justification for the Association's existence: the standard by which its success or failure should be judged.

(2) The Founding Principles of the W.E.A.

Although there have been doubts expressed in recent years about the W.E.A.'s commitment to specifically working class education (symbolised by resolutions at national conferences calling for the elimination of the word "workers" from the Association's name), there was no doubt among the founders and early pioneers that the purpose of the W.E.A. was to stimulate the demand for education "in the interests of those who are largely occupied by manual labour." Mansbridge claimed that "all the public utterances of the time make it clear that the first condition of the power and life of the Association was that at least three-quarters of its members should be actual labouring men and women," or, as G.D.H. Cole the British Labour historian more forthrightly stated, "the W.E.A. is nothing, or worse than nothing, unless it is based firmly in the support of the working class movement."[4]

There was predictably less agreement about what the terms "worker" or "working man" or "working class" actually meant, or what proportion of the students it was considered essential should fall within these categories. Mansbridge warned that in time the tutorial classes would prove "congenial to the general adult mind" rather than specifically to working class people and that the presence of too many teachers could be a danger, but he was prepared to tolerate 25 percent non-working class students, and his definition of worker was broader (embracing clerks as well as artisans) than most trade unionists would then accept. Indeed, Mansbridge appears on occasions to have approved of the W.E.A. as "a replica in miniature of English life" rather than an exclusively working class body. The problem of defining who are workers has continued to dog the W.E.A. ever since, becoming if anything more difficult in a Welfare State than in Edwardian England. Definitions are usually an amalgam of family background, educational experience, institutional involvement, and occupation. The whole question of how successful the W.E.A. has been in fulfilling its purpose, to be tackled later in this paper, will to some extent depend on which formula of social class is accepted.[5]

If working class involvement was one leg on which the W.E.A. claimed to stand, university standards was the other. An unassailable belief prevailed that there were many workers, who, having been denied the opportunity in their youth, were both capable and desirous of a university education. The W.E.A. "started with the idea . . . that ordinary men and women working in the day in manual occupations can do work of high intellectual quality, and of persuading them to undertake it. It did so not by minimising the exacting character of the demands which it made on them, but by emphasising it," claimed R.H. Tawney, the tutor of the first tutorial classes at Rochdale and Longton and later President of the W.E.A.[6] At first the W.E.A. hoped and attempted to achieve this goal by supporting and promoting University Extension courses, but it experienced the same financial difficulties as the Extension Movement, which tended to cause the courses to be too expensive for working class people and too short for the work to be of "high intellectual quality." By 1905 Mansbridge was fearing that the W.E.A. would fail "unless intensive class teaching up to university standard was developed."[7]

During the next couple of years the W.E.A. establishment waged a well-organised campaign to democratise Oxford University so that its resources should be expended for the benefit of all those with real intellectual aspirations, including poor scholars and working men, rather than for the exclusive use of the wealthy "idle pass men."

"I would rather have better education given to the masses of the working class than the best for a few," argued Philip Snowden M.P., a prominent socialist and early W.E.A. supporter.[8] On 10 August 1907 the W.E.A. held another conference at Oxford, which approved the formation of a committee of W.E.A. and University nominees to report on how best working class participation in university education could be achieved. The next year the committee recommended the establishment in industrial towns of a network of tutorial classes "specifically adapted to the needs of workpeople," to be of at least two years' duration, and secondly "the provision of machinery for ensuring that a proportion of the working class students in such classes may pass regularly and easily to Oxford to study in the University itself . . ." The report went on to deal with the organisation, membership, curricula, methods of study, and teachers of the tutorial classes and their relationship to the University; the method of selecting students for the residential diploma courses and the academic content of such courses; and the financial arrangements necessary for both tutorial classes and the residential courses.[9]

In the event, the first recommendation was a considerable success and tutorial classes spread rapidly, but the attempt to open the doors of Oxford itself to working class students was an almost complete failure. Only a handful of tutorial class students went on to residential courses, partly through lack of adequate funds, but also because the W.E.A. itself, particularly at the grass roots, began to doubt the desirability of expending so high a proportion of its resources on sending relatively few students to Oxford. It was felt that summer school scholarships for many was a better policy than full-time courses for a few. Thereafter the responsibility of maintaining "university standards" fell squarely on the tutorial classes themselves rather than as before, when they had been regarded as a means towards that goal.

Most of the universities in England and Wales followed the lead of Oxford in setting up joint committees for tutorial classes; within five years there were nearly 150 tutorial classes with over 3,200 students. The aim and intention was that the work undertaken in these classes should be of university honours degree standard. Some doubts were expressed (for example in the Report of the Board of Education on the Universities and University Colleges, 1908-9) as to whether this could really be viewed as "university education" because such education must be "based upon a broad preliminary education of wide range," which the tutorial class students frequently lacked. However, the early class reports claimed that the work being done was of exceptionally high quality

and the special report of His Majesty's Inspector, Mr. Headlam, and Professor L.T. Hobhouse for 1909-10 considered them up to the required standard.[10]

But what precisely was meant by "university standard"? It was felt that one way of attaining it was to ensure that the tutor was competent, and therefore the 1908 Report on Oxford and Working-class Education recommended not only that the tutor should have sound academic qualifications but also should be brought regularly into contact with the critical atmosphere of the University in order to maintain his scholarship. Equally important were the limitations on the size of classes to not more than thirty students; the two-year minimum length of classes (soon increased to three years), and the commitment of the students to allow "nothing short of actual necessity" to interrupt their study. This commitment was translated into a pledge to attend every class, engage in regular reading at home, and write twelve essays each year.[11] These were the highly demanding mechanisms to ensure that the classes reached university standard, but they do not themselves define that standard. This was done by Headlam and Hobhouse in their special report on tutorial classes (1909-10) where they stated that courses should be "scientific, detatched and impartial in character"; should teach the students to be critical of authorities and sources of information; thorough in their investigation and empirical in their method; valuing of truth; able to distinguish fact from opinion and to argue all points of view.[12]

This liberal academic definition of objectivity conformed closely with Mansbridge's non-materialistic, almost spiritual concept of education, originating perhaps from his frustrated desire to take holy orders. He conceived of the W.E.A. as a crusade and education as something ideal in itself, completely uncontaminated by the urge for material improvements or even social and political changes. These might flow out of the flood of Education, but the pure springs of Education should be unpolluted by any such worldly aspirations. Indeed, Education would raise the workers above such aspirations: "the deep draughts of knowledge drunk by those within the currents of correct thought will provide that power and strength which, in spite of stressful and baneful days, will divert the strong movements of the people from the narrow paths of immediate interests . . .," Mansbridge suggested in 1903.[13] Ten years later he was describing the tutorial class movement as a manisfestation of the English people's "desire for education as a way of life rather than as a means of livelihood or a mere intellectual exercise" and as a "pursuit of knowledge for its own sake, or as a means of development of body, soul and spirit" which should "build up a new

attitude towards life and . . . purify and ennoble social habits."[14] Again, when recording the early story of the W.E.A. in 1920, Mansbridge emphasised that "education has never been confused [by the W.E.A.]. . . with the acquisition of the means of getting on in life . . . The general appeal . . . must be a spiritual one - for education is ultimately of the spirit . . ."[15] In fact, he claimed that the practical application of all this spiritual education was never even thought about.[16] Students did not join W.E.A. classes to improve their material or social position or for any specific purpose but out of a "yearning after spiritual perfection" - "to develop the mind and body in the power of the spirit."[17] It was this firmly held belief which enabled Mansbridge to assure a middle class audience in Leeds during the First World War that the workers did not envy their wealth but were angered by the lack of educational opportunities for their children. Similarly he found great encouragement in the W.E.A.'s repudiation of the "ephemeral power" of diplomas and certificates whose existence threatened to deny the belief "that true study is its own sufficient reward."[18]

Even Mansbridge felt on occasions the danger of the W.E.A. becoming a vague "association for making people good," but behind the vague spiritual language was a firm belief that there were such attainable objectives as "correct thought" and "true study." This belief led him inexorably towards Oxford as the source of True Knowledge or Real Education, despite the frequently expressed working class distrust of the universities. "It does not matter in the least who educates so long as the education is real," preached Mansbridge, and thus the W.E.A. became ensnared in the concept of objective university education.[19]

The Mansbridgean W.E.A. was welcomed with open arms by the Oxford social reformers who harboured a sense of guilt about the social exclusiveness of the universities. Edwardian liberalism decreed that "it has become incumbent upon Universities to watch carefully every sign that a new class is ready to receive their guidance, in order that the seed of University culture may be deposited wherever it has suitable material on which to work."[20] A search was being conducted for a suitable working class seed-bed for this University culture which would not turn out to be so alien an environment as to produce grotesque new flowers of unrecognisable and unwanted scent and hue. Mansbridge's view of education, echoing so completely their own ideas, was totally acceptable to the Oxford liberals. The new Association promised to be a safe beneficiary of their liberalism, an ideal opportunity for acquiring a veneer of working class participation and support without risking any fundamental social upheavals.

Many of the Oxford supporters of the W.E.A., such as Balliol scholars R.H. Tawney, A.L. Smith, and William Temple (who later became Archbishop of Canterbury and the first president of the W.E.A.), Charles Gore, Bishop of Birmingham (and later of Oxford), A.E. Zimmern, A.D. Lindsay, and Sydney Ball, senior tutor of St. John's College and active member of the Fabian Society, were strongly influenced by Christian Socialist ideals. They had inherited F.D. Maurice's belief in the ability of education to bring about "God's order" in the world in the form of a Christian-inspired socialist society. This idea in turn was a major influence in shaping the development of the W.E.A.[21]

Similarly, the Government (or at least its Board of Education) was seeking ways to fend off accusations of being "permeated with a caste feeling . . . and . . . entirely estranged from working class needs." It attempted to do so by appointing D.J. Shackleton, a Labour M.P., and Mansbridge to the Consultative Committee of the Board of Education and also, at the 1907 Oxford Conference, making the famous offer of a share of the "golden stream" (i.e. government grants) for the W.E.A. This offer, which really enabled the W.E.A. to break out of the financial confines restricting the Extension Movement, and to establish the tutorial class programme, did not come out of the blue. Mansbridge had long been in touch with Sir Robert Morant, Permanent Secretary to the Board of Education, and had impressed him with the W.E.A's moderation. Support for the W.E.A. was seen as a sound political investment against extremism. The real political implications of this investment were revealed many years later in 1925 when the W.E.A. was being pressed by its more radical rival, the National Council for Labour Colleges [N.C.L.C.], to adopt the common objective of "education for social and industrial emancipation." Although the W.E.A. accepted this phrase only as a general statement of aims, and did not write it into its constitution, Lord Percy, President of the Board of Education, and the Local Educational Authorities began to question the W.E.A.'s suitability for receipt of public money. They carried out a searching examination of the W.E.A.'s intentions and made grant aid subject to acceptable performance. They made explicit what had long been said of the W.E.A., that its privileged position was conditional on good behaviour.[22]

The emergence of the W.E.A. was welcomed by some University and Establishment figures as a means of educating the working class in its newly acquired political responsibilities. Mansbridge had stressed this need in his 1903 blue-print for the new Association: "If it be admitted, reasonably enough, that working men . . . should be represented on governing bodies, it must also be admitted that lack of thinking power in the rank and file tends

to nullify the good effect of such representation . . ."[23] He quoted, with obvious approval, the criticisms voiced by Richard Bell, General Secretary of the Society of Railway Servants, of the irresponsible and thoughtless actions of some of his executive committee during the 1900 Taff Vale strike, as an example of the imperative need for wise education for those taking an active part in democratic movements such as trade unions. Considering the crippling effects the Taff Vale judgement threatened for the Trade Union Movement, Mansbridge could hardly have selected a more significant example to demonstrate the real implications of his concept of spiritual, non-materialist education for the working class. The very best that could be said of his choice of example is that it was tactless.[24]

The growing power of the trade unions, the emergence of working class political associations, and particularly the success of the new Labour Party in winning twenty-nine seats in the 1906 general election were causing much anxiety among the ruling class (liberal as well as conservative) and making education of the working class for responsible democratic citizenship even more imperative in their eyes. This is very plainly stated in the Report on Oxford and Working-class Education:

> We consider that at the present moment the appeal of workpeople to the Universities can claim an urgency which it may be held formerly not to have possessed. The demand that the Universities shall serve all classes derives much additional significance from changes which are taking place in the constitution of English society and in the distribution of political power. The most conspicuous symptoms of such changes to which we refer have been the growth of Labour Representation in the House of Commons and on Municipal bodies, the great increase in the membership of political associations which claim to express the ideals of at least a considerable section of the working classes, the increasing interest taken by trade unions, which till recent years were purely industrial organisations, in political action, and the growing demand for a widening in the sphere of social organisation. As to the advantages and disadvantages of these developments, we, of course, express no opinion. But their effect has certainly been both to foster a ferment of ideas in classes where formerly it did not exist and to make it imperative that they should obtain the knowledge necessary to enable them to show foresight in their choice of political means . . .

> It has always been the privilege of the older Universities (though, of course, not to the exclusion of the new) to train men for all departments of political life and public administration. Throughout the nineteenth century a considerable proportion of those, who, as ministers or members of Parliament, or public officials, wielded great influence, have received their earliest education in political ideas at the hands of Oxford, and have acknowledged freely that they have learned through it to be more efficient servants of the community. The Trade Union secretary and the 'Labour member' need an Oxford Education as much, and will use it to as good ends, as the civil servant or the barrister. It seems to us that it would involve a grave loss both to Oxford and to English political life were the close association which has existed between the University and the world of affairs to be broken or impaired on the accession of new classes to power.[25]

One way that Oxford attempted to mend its fences with the new men of power was to show much greater interest in Ruskin College, which it had almost totally ignored between its foundation as a residential college in Oxford for working men in 1899 and the general election of 1906. After that date it displayed considerably more concern for supervising the provision of a "statesman-like education" for the up-and-coming working class leaders at Ruskin.[26]

The other channel by which Oxford sought to educate the emerging working class leaders "to show foresight in their choice of political means" was the W.E.A. It was envisaged not so much that the ablest workers should be educated into the middle class, as that they should be taught the liberal values of an objective university education. They could then either return to their former occupations or "become the future teachers and leaders, the philosophers and economists of the working class," thus uplifting their peers to the level and way of thinking previously considered the preserve of the middle classes.[27]

While some in the universities and Government may have rejoiced at the form and utterances of the new Association for working class education, there were others who regarded this vision of university objective or neutral education as a grand design to impose an alien culture on the working class and to assimilate its potential leaders into the ruling class (whatever the Oxford Report might say). They feared that learning to see "that there are two sides to every question"[28] would impede their political sight, while too many "deep draughts" of such education would do exactly what

Mansbridge was promising-- "build up a new attitude to life" and "divert the strong movements of the people." Even Mansbridge admitted there was suspicion among working class people that the universities would exploit, enslave, or side-track them from their legitimate objectives. Although he claimed this opposition "never rose to any great proportions," nevertheless it "never wholly ceased."[29]

This distrust, much in evidence at the 1907 Oxford Conference, appeared to threaten all carefully laid plans until J.M. Mactavish, a Portsmouth shipwright, made a powerful advocacy for compromise: "To Oxford I say, open wide your doors and take us in; we need you; you need us." This speech temporarily overcame that feeling of distrust, although Mansbridge welcomed it only grudgingly and the Rev. Hudson Shaw, a veteran extension lecturer, objected to the suggestion that W.E.A. students might have some say in the choice of tutor and subject matter or, as he put it, "tune Oxford's pulpits," thus reflecting liberal Oxford's real desire to compose the music and call the tune in this new adventure in academic slumming.[30]

When the Oxford Report was published the following year, all the old distrust of the universities' intentions surfaced once more, and was expressed by people of very varied political views. The conservative Morning Post anticipated that working class students would inevitably become alienated from their background by the atmosphere of Oxford. Ramsay Macdonald, the future Labour Prime Minister, also warned that Oxford would "innoculate the more intelligent sections of the working classes" and predicted that "you cannot recreate Oxford by an infusion of working men . . . Oxford will assimilate them, not they Oxford." The radical Ruskin students saw the report as a "bare-faced attempt to seize control of the education of working men in the interests of the governing class."[31]

The Ruskin students formed the Plebs League in October 1908 to promote "independent working class education" (by and for the workers) in contrast to the W.E.A.'s version of working class education. In the following year, after a students' strike, they abandoned Ruskin which they believed was being manipulated by the University in the same direction as the W.E.A., and established their own Labour College to provide working class education independent of the University's ruling class and capitalist influence. Unlike the W.E.A. leaders, they believed objectivity was a convenient curtain behind which ruling class ideas (such as capitalist economic theories) could pass unchallenged. There was no such thing as objective or neutral education, they argued, and this viewpoint was shared by many trade unionists and workers. The Labour Colleges made no claim to be non-political or non-partisan, but to teach workers to identify and then eliminate the economic causes of

social evils through the eradication of the capitalist economy. They taught workers to "free [themselves] from the spell of a servile tradition and a slave philosophy, and to look at the facts as they see them from their own standpoint."[32] Such teaching implied a "knowledge for action, a knowledge about how the present class-riven and class-ruled society had historically developed, a knowledge which would fit and fire the men and women of the class, exploited and materially and intellectually impoverished by it, to change it consciously into a classless social order."[33] This objective was written into the constitution of the N.C.L.C. in 1925 when its aims were stated to be "to provide independent working class education in order to help the workers to develop their capacities and to equip them for their Trade Union, Labour and Co-operative activities in the work of bringing an end to the system of capitalism and enabling the workers to achieve their social and industrial emancipation."[34]

The W.E.A. claimed the Labour Colleges taught people what to think while the W.E.A. taught its students how to think, but its Labour College critics saw the real difference as being between a dialectical concept of education and the W.E.A.'s non-functional concept. They doubted the W.E.A.'s ideal of achieving a better world through the widespread dissemination of Real Knowledge, believing rather that reform could be achieved only if the working class acted independently politically and industrially, controlled their own educational arrangements, and won political power. These goals could never have been contemplated by an educational organisation dependent on state aid. We have already seen how the Board of Education and the Local Education Authorities reacted when the W.E.A. tentatively adopted "education for social and industrial emancipation" as an aim. Their response demonstrated the limitation of the W.E.A.'s own independence, as did the charity status which brought it tax exemptions denied to the N.C.L.C. The reality of the W.E.A.'s privileged position was that its vital funds were conditional on its "impartial" blend of education not unduly upsetting the social status quo.[35]

There were those within the W.E.A. as well as outside who were unhappy about Mansbridge's view that education is emancipation and were not altogether sorry about his resignation in 1915. He was replaced as General Secretary by J.M. Mactavish who attached greater importance than Mansbridge to forging close relations with the trade unions. The W.E.A. adopted a somewhat ambivalent attitude, claiming on the one hand to be non-political and collaborating with the state system and the universities, while at the same time offering a distinctive working class education to equip the workers for the class struggle. To some extent this ambivalence had existed from the beginning and certainly since publication of the Oxford

Report, which had envisaged the tutorial classes as training the future working class leaders. It became more marked after Mansbridge's departure, at least until the N.C.L.C. and the Board of Education squeezed the W.E.A. from opposite directions in 1925 into recognising that "non-political" meant orthodox education not specifically or even primarily for social and political emancipation.[36] However, there were men such as R.H. Tawney and G.D.H. Cole who were concerned that the W.E.A. should not be diverted from its social reform role. With this in mind, Cole wrote in Plebs (the periodical of the Plebs League) in 1916 that he looked forward to the day when the W.E.A. would be funded by the Labour Movement, thus freeing it of dependence on state finance. Nine years later (at the time of the threat to withdraw state funds) he wrote pungently that:

> We have seen too many branches wrecked by the well meaning educationalist, who is so keen on fostering what he calls the 'student mind', that he has no desire, or no power, to attract the militant Trade Unionist who wants to turn his education to definite and practical purpose. Personally, I have seen too much of the 'student mind' to have any love for it, or to want it to dominate our movement. I want to serve the live-wired practical worker, who wants guidance in facing the practical problems of living.

Cole went on to tell W.E.A. students to act as proselytes in the working class bodies and not to leave the W.E.A. to be run by those who believe in education "as an opiate for social discontent."[37]

There were many others within the W.E.A. who rejected Mansbridge's vision of its role, such as George Thompson, who was appointed W.E.A. District Secretary for Yorkshire when that District was formed in 1914 and remained in office (except for a six-year interval in New Zealand) until his retirement in 1945. Thompson scorned Mansbridge's hopes for class reconciliation and the concept of education as a bridge from one class to another. Workers' education was intended to deepen the students' understanding of class solidarity, to equip them to serve their class, and to achieve social and industrial emancipation. Those subjects, such as economics, economic history, and social theory, which enabled the workers to defend themselves against the pressures of the economic system, were the most important ones to study. Although not going as far as the N.C.L.C., whose leaders believed in the absolute need to teach subjects from a strictly working class point of view, this advocacy of education for social and political change was far removed from the Mansbridgean shibboleth. Thompson was representative

of "a whole generation of working men who devoted their time and energy to the W.E.A. . . . Socialism was the new evangelical movement from which they derived their peculiar strength and inner direction."[38] It was from this source that the W.E.A. derived its main dynamic over many years.

So far, this review of the W.E.A.'s founding principles has concentrated on the two fundamental objectives of working class participation and university standards, and the problems which arose in attempting to embrace them both. Before concluding this section, mention should be made of a third important principle adopted by the W.E.A. from its earliest days. This was the democratisation of its organisation both in its federal structure and classes. Although the infant Association was necessarily organised and administered centrally, it was always the pioneers' intention to decentralise and "allow each part of the country to develop on its own lines, and in its own way, within the natural limits of the work of the whole Association." Gradually, it became more of a federation of districts, each represented (with other affiliated bodies) on the national committee. Individual branches, which were represented on their District Councils, had always enjoyed considerable autonomy and often undertook very independent activity, as illustrated by the record of the first year's work of the Rochdale Educational Guild (a W.E.A. branch), fully described in an appendix to Mansbridge's Adventure in Working Class Education. The branch organised extension lectures and classes to study Shakespeare and Ruskin and other classes on a variety of subjects; reading circles; short lecture courses in history and natural history; art gallery and museum work; an educational calendar in the town's free library; educational excursions and free lectures for women. The Rochdale Educational Guild became generally recognised as a "sort of educational 'Clearing House' for the district," an achievement gained almost completely through its own independent action.[39]

The W.E.A.'s democratic principle was also manifested in the organisation and running of its classes. According to Mansbridge, the W.E.A.'s missionary address was, "Discover your own needs, organise in your own way, study as you wish to study. There are no two towns or villages alike." It was Mactavish's expression of the students' need to choose sympathetic tutors and appropriate subjects which aroused the opposition of Hudson Shaw and J.A.R. Marriott, Secretary of the Oxford Extension Delegacy, to students "tuning Oxford's pulpits or choosing the preachers." After the Oxford Report was published, other academics attacked its proposal to "give a controlling voice in the selection of a teacher to a representative body of workmen, and to co-operate with them in their efforts to obtain what they want, instead of

providing, without consulting them, what the University thinks they ought to want." When Mansbridge addressed the Congress of the Universities of the British Empire on the subject of University Tutorial Classes in 1912, he said, "The students control the class . . . It is the class of the students - each student is a teacher, and each teacher is a student; the humblest is not afraid to teach, and the most advanced is willing to learn." This concept of democracy within the Association and within its classes must be regarded as a third founding principle of the W.E.A.[40]

(3) Aspirations in Practice, 1903-1946

If we now review the history of the W.E.A. from 1903 until after the Second World War, it is indisputably a story of growth. As previously mentioned, the first branch was formed at Reading in October 1904. Two years later there were thirteen branches and 110 by 1912, increasing to over 200 by 1919. Branches continued to be founded, rising from 635 just before the Second World War to 932 just after (1946/7). W.E.A. membership increased in much the same way, from Mr. and Mrs. Mansbridge in 1903 to over 7,000 in 1912; climbing steadily to around 17,000 in 1919; 28,652 in 1938/9 and 45,320 by 1946/7. A large number of organisations, (including trade unions, co-operative societies, universities, local education authorities, working men's clubs, adult schools, and many others) also affiliated with the W.E.A. They totaled nearly 2,500 by 1919.[41]

In the British Isles the branches were grouped into districts, of which there were sixteen by 1924. Subsequently, another five were formed. Members could join either individual branches or the districts. The districts were governed by a council representative of the branches, the affiliated societies, and the district members, and were virtually autonomous organisations. When the W.E.A. was granted the responsibility in 1924 of providing classes itself with government funds, each of the districts was recognised as a separate "Responsible Body." They were only loosely federated by a national central council. Although national policy was promulgated by an annual conference, the power and independence of the districts (particularly after they became Responsible Bodies) was such that they could interpret and execute the Association's policies in very different ways. As a result, the W.E.A. evolved very differently in different regions of the British Isles. The W.E.A. cannot, therefore, be described as a uniform organisation, and it has also been seriously handicapped in attempting to carry out any nationally agreed policy.[42]

Within a few years of its foundation the W.E.A. began to spread overseas, particularly to what were then the British Dominions; first informally through the influence of W.E.A. migrants; later by more formal "colonisation." An address by Mansbridge to the first Congress of Universities of the Empire in 1912 brought him an invitation to visit Australia the following year. He found that there was already a considerable number of people in Australia with experience of the British W.E.A. and keen to promote it in their new home. Mansbridge spent five months in Australia, speaking to all kinds of organisations, particularly trade unions and university bodies, persuading them to establish and support the W.E.A. The following year, Meredith Atkinson, a tutorial class tutor from Durham, England, was appointed Director of Tutorial Classes at Sydney University. He assumed responsibility for developing the W.E.A. not only in New South Wales but throughout the whole of Australia. Within a few years branches were established in all the states, although the Association did not long survive in Western Australia because of a lack of response from the University there. The early Australian W.E.A. mirrored exactly its counterpart in Britain, with the same objectives and federal structure, and indeed regarded itself very much as part of the same movement. By 1920 the Australian membership was estimated to be 3,000.[43]

There was similar interest in the W.E.A. in New Zealand, and Mansbridge briefly visited Aukland after leaving Australia. Enthusiasm spread from Australia and was further kindled by a visit from Meredith Atkinson and David Stewart (Secretary of the New South Wales Council of the W.E.A.) early in 1915. Five branches were soon founded. Later a federal structure consisting of four district councils under a Dominion Council was established to organise and promote W.E.A. classes, with a Tutorial Classes Committee equally representative of the W.E.A. and the University of New Zealand, fulfilling much the same role as the British Joint Committees. Its precarious financial position rendered the W.E.A. heavily and increasingly dependent on University resources, at least until 1938 when a national Council of Adult Education was established by the government to co-ordinate the various bodies involved in adult education. Although the W.E.A. was represented on the Council and its local advisory committees, the effect was to obscure some of the separate identity of the Association.[44]

Mansbridge also visited Montreal and Toronto on his way home in 1913, but achieved nothing very lasting. Four years later an evening class was organised in Toronto by the Principal of the Upper Canada College and members of the Toronto Trades and Labour Council. They launched a W.E.A. the following year. As the movement spread to other Canadian cities, some tutorial

classes were commenced in association with several Canadian universities. However, the W.E.A. never became firmly entrenched in Canada, which imitated much more closely the U.S.A. pattern of workers' education under the direct auspices of the trade unions.[45]

In 1915 the W.E.A. was introduced into South Africa and managed to organise some classes in and around Durban and Johannesburg over the next few years, without ever really taking root in that country.[46] An attempt was also made to launch the W.E.A. in Germany and a class was formed at Cologne, but the movement was opposed by Cologne University and the Social Democratic Party, which had its own well-established organisation of local and district education committees for the promotion of workers' education.[47]

Development of the W.E.A. was very considerably determined by its financial means. It was largely the realisation that the Association could achieve nothing more than the Extension Movement unless it obtained substantial financial resources to supplement students' fees that led Mansbridge and his colleagues to organise the Oxford Conference in 1907, where Sir Robert Morant made the famous offer of help from the "golden stream" of government funds. The interim report issued the following May recommended that half the cost of running tutorial classes should be met by the providing university and the other half by the W.E.A., which would be assisted by grants from the Board of Education and the Local Education Authorities. The universities, the government, and the local authorities thus became the main sources of W.E.A. income in Britain, supplemented by certain charities such as the Cassel, Carnegie, and Gilchrist Trusts, and by W.E.A. membership and affiliation fees. Securing this direct grant aid was probably Mansbridge's greatest achievement, for without it the tutorial class movement would almost certainly have failed at an early stage.[48]

The W.E.A. was even more successful, at least in its pioneer days, in obtaining government grants in Australia, where the annual contributions made by the several state governments exceeded 12,000 pounds by 1919: a larger sum than had ever been received in any one year by the W.E.A. from state funds in Britain at that time. The New South Wales government was the most generous, with a grant of 3,000 pounds. In New Zealand most of the classes were initially financed by the University, which granted 1,200 pounds p.a. for work provided in conjunction with the W.E.A. from its National Endowment Fund. Beginning in 1919 the University received 2,000 pounds p.a. from the national government for tutorial classes, rising to 3,000 pounds in 1925. And in 1922 a direct government grant to the W.E.A. Dominion Council was instituted, but was redistributed in large part to its four district councils. The Carnegie Trust also made

substantial grants during the 1930s. After the New Zealand Council of Adult Education was established in 1938, W.E.A. grants were paid by the Council rather than directly by the Department of Education. This gave rise to greater bureaucratic control and on one occasion to the dismissal of a tutor for "alleged indiscreet statements."[49]

Mention has already been made of how dependence on state funds likewise led to some national and local government interference in Britain, preventing the W.E.A. from taking too radical a view of its role or encouraging too extreme forms of social and political emancipation. The Board (later Ministry) of Education regulations governing the grants after 1907 certainly determined the form in which classes were run and attempted to control their "standard." At first, existing education regulations were modified to allow a special per capita grant to be paid for tutorial classes on condition that the students' work was "of a standard corresponding to that required for an Honours Degree." The report (already quoted) of H.M. Inspector Headlam and Professor Hobhouse in 1909-10 was the outcome of government surveillance to ensure compliance with this condition. In 1913 special regulations for tutorial classes were issued to allow a grant per class rather than per student, and certain safeguards were introduced requiring the courses to last for not less than three years, each year to consist of twenty-four two-hour meetings with half the class time devoted to lecturing and half to discussion. The number of students was not to exceed thirty-two; they were to attend regularly and to do written work as well as home reading. Once the course had begun, new students could be added to the class only in exceptional cases. All these conditions were intended to ensure that the courses were serious and sustained and would reach "university standard" at least by their final year.[50]

The Board of Education's "golden stream" was intended for tutorial classes, but the W.E.A. also managed to obtain some central and local government money for less advanced classes during the first decade after the initial offer. This funding was threatened in 1917 when the Board proposed to divert all such resources to local education authorities, making them solely responsible for all forms of adult liberal education with the exception of the university tutorial classes. However, the Adult Education Committee of the Ministry of Reconstruction concluded that voluntary organisations such as the W.E.A. had an important part to play and recommended in its Final Report in 1919 that in certain circumstances those organisations should receive direct grants for the provision of one-year classes. Whether or not as a result of this report, the 1917 draft regulations were not confirmed and no substantial changes were made in the regulations for another five years.[51]

Then in 1924 important new regulations were introduced extending the range of university courses qualifying for grants to include one-year preparatory and advanced tutorial classes and at the same time made provision for the payment of grants to other "approved associations" which became responsible for one-year and shorter courses in liberal adult education. Each of the W.E.A. districts in England and Wales obtained recognition as a "Responsible Body," as they began to be known, and were the major recipients of these grants. From this time on the W.E.A. (through each of its districts) developed into an important providing body in its own right. Eventually, more of the W.E.A.'s energy and limited manpower became diverted from its original objective of organising and stimulating a demand for tutorial classes into that of offering shorter courses not required to be so demanding of the students and serving increasingly as soft options or easier alternatives to the rigours of tutorial classes. In the terminal classes lasting less than one session, students were not obliged to do any written work at all. The 1924 and subsequent amendments of the grant regulations also enabled the universities to embark on a whole variety of less demanding, shorter courses.[52]

During the first decades after the Oxford Conference, a spectacular rise took place in the number of tutorial classes. In 1908, immediately following the publication of the Oxford Report, eight tutorial classes were arranged in conjunction with Oxford University; in the following year seven English universities were co-operating in the provision of thirty-eight classes. This figure grew steadily until 1914, by which time all the universities in England and Wales were involved, and classes had also been started in Ireland, Scotland, Australia, New Zealand, Canada, and South Africa. The First World War caused a temporary decline, but by 1918/19 there were 145 tutorial classes in England and Wales, six in Scotland, five in Ireland, fifty-four in Australia, thirty-four in New Zealand, seven in Canada, and one at Durban, South Africa. The next two decades saw a further increase of more than 500 percent in the number of tutorial classes in England and Wales (reaching 810 in 1938/9) and a more modest increase of about 50 percent in Australia and New Zealand. A few tutorial classes continued to be run also in Canada and South Africa, although the distinction between tutorial and shorter classes was becoming increasingly blurred in almost all the overseas W.E.A. areas, making exact figures impossible. The Second World War caused another decline, at least until 1944, but then the numbers of classes began to rise again, to 756 in England and Wales in 1946/7.[53]

Too much reliance should not be placed on the exact numbers of classes or students quoted, because the statistical sources are not wholly reliable.[54]

Mansbridge himself had a healthy disdain for such things:

> It may perhaps be well if statistics of classes are little talked about, because statistics are in themselves dangerous and tend to divert minds from the true issues. It is difficult to emphasise statistics and keep the soul alive.[55]

Many of his successors in the field of adult education have shared this disdain, to judge by the lack of agreement in their statistical returns. Nevertheless, the general picture of the tutorial class movement is clear enough: a healthy expansion in Britain during its first three decades with a leveling-off in the mid-1930s and an equally rapid growth but earlier leveling-off in the W.E.A.'s overseas.

Meanwhile, the number of university shorter courses increased very rapidly. In Britain they exceeded the tutorial classes by the later 1930s and outnumbered them by two to one by 1945/6.[56] However, the universities were not the only, or even the major, providers of shorter courses. The W.E.A., despite its originally conceived role as the co-ordinator of existing agencies for the promotion of workers' education, found it was stepping further and further into the arena itself to organise and provide its own classes. Before it obtained Responsible Body status in 1924, the financial resources for such courses were haphazard and the hard evidence for their quantity or quality somewhat obscure. Once again, Mansbridge (writing in 1920) aptly refers to this fact:

> Many people regard the W.E.A. and the University Tutorial Class Movement as one and the same thing. They treat the terms as interchangeable, probably because the system of University Tutorial Classes has been the most prominent constructive work of the Association . . . The rest of its work, *even though it may have been more important*, has been intangible, and elusive . . . Such work cannot be estimated, statisticised, visited, seen.[57]

The italicised phrase (my italics) emphasises that such courses were numerous, even if the evidence is elusive. In fact, it was not always possible to know whether a particular educational activity was a W.E.A. one or not, as the Association inspired or supported many activities which were financed by some other body, or completely self-financing. Until the W.E.A. received direct grants and distributed the financial resources itself, there was no reason or opportunity for it to keep a detailed record of all the educational activities it stimulated.

Some of these activities consisted of serious and prolonged classes, either for organisations such as the adult schools, trade unions and co-operative societies, or for specially established groups. Sometimes they were "reserve classes," formed alongside a tutorial class, to train men and women to fill vacancies in the tutorial class as they occurred. These and many other classes and lecture courses were taught by unpaid tutorial class students who were encouraged to undertake such "missionary work." W.E.A. branches also sponsored many less formal activities, including single lectures, study or reading circles, discussion groups, art exhibitions, plays and concerts; even rambles through the countryside. Indeed, as Mansbridge observed, "almost every kind of educational method was adopted." The varied programme of the Rochdale branch during its first year has already been mentioned. Just as typical of the W.E.A. in these early years was the work of the branch formed by Theodore Grubb, a Quaker educationalist, in Wensleydale, Yorkshire, c.1912. He and his followers organised discussion groups, study circles, two-penny concerts, walks, plays, lectures, and more regular evening classes in this remote Pennine dale. Much of this work was unpaid, with some financial assistance from the County Education Committee and a Quaker philanthropist. The branch helped to form various local organisations and societies including a Boy Scout troop and several literary societies. Gradually the branch itself evolved into a drama society and drifted away from the W.E.A., severing its connections after about ten years of informal association (to be reformed two decades later).[58]

With such a variety of informal as well as formal educational activities, it is indeed impossible to quantify them, although W.E.A. branch records tend to support Mansbridge's statement that these "may have been more important" in numerical terms than the tutorial classes from very early on in the life of the Association.[59] Following the 1924 regulations, as previously explained, more of the W.E.A.'s energies were probably diverted from the promotion of tutorial classes.

The number of W.E.A. one-year classes exceeded tutorials as early as 1919/20 (328 to 229), and the gap thereafter grew wider year by year. But the W.E.A. was also promoting an increasing number of even shorter courses. In 1928 its programme of 1,826 courses consisted of approximately one-third tutorials, one-third sessional and terminal classes, and one-third others. By 1946/7, tutorials represented only 14 percent of the total programme of 5,276 classes, whereas over half the classes were shorter than ten weeks. The proportion of tutorial class students relative to all W.E.A. students had fallen to 20 percent by 1931/2. It remained approximately at

that level throughout the 1930s, but dropped to as low as 8 percent during the War. By 1946/7 the percentage had risen to eleven, but this still meant that only one in every nine of all W.E.A. students was attending a tutorial class.[60]

Much the same was happening to the W.E.A. in other parts of the world. In New Zealand the W.E.A. had run "half session" courses of twelve weeks from the very beginning. During the 1920s there was considerable opposition within the W.E.A. (particularly in the Canterbury district) to tutorial classes and a move towards short courses, culminating in 1933 with a redefinition of tutorial classes as those having a minimum of twelve lectures. Whatever the official returns to the Central Joint Advisory Committee on Tutorial Classes in London might say to the contrary, this redefinition marked the real elimination of tutorial classes in New Zealand. Although partly the result of the financial stringency of the early 1930s, no effort was made to reverse the trend after government grants were restored in 1936. Other forms of adult education such as the box scheme and discussion groups, which dispensed with regular visits by tutors, were promoted by the New Zealand W.E.A. These and short lecture courses increased during the 1930s and '40s. Between 1936 and 1946 the number of W.E.A. students in New Zealand approximately doubled from 4,375 to 8,705, but the proportion of students in "tutorial classes" (i.e. any course of more than sixteen lectures or any other course listed in the W.E.A. annual reports as tutorial, although these could have as few as twelve lectures) declined from 57 to 15 percent.[61]

In Australia, as in New Zealand, the economic depression hastened the switch to shorter courses after 1929, although even before this date the term "tutorial class" had been applied indiscriminately to almost any kind of evening class for the general public. There were very few classes running for more than one year after c. 1925, despite the claims of the C.J.A.C. annual reports.[62] In Canada the small W.E.A. programme enjoyed fluctuating fortunes; in 1933/4 more than half of its sixty-seven classes were classified as tutorials, but within a few years its programme consisted only of short courses. In South Africa the W.E.A. programme amounted to merely five twelve-lecture courses in Durban by 1927/8. An organising tutor was appointed at that time with financial assistance from the Carnegie Trust, with the effect of boosting the programme of short courses for a few years, but not tutorial classes.[63]

One of the main reasons for the gradual switch to shorter courses was that even from the earliest days, difficulty was experienced in persuading people to commit themselves to three years of study and to do the work

required in a tutorial class. Most people, if given the chance, preferred a less exacting course.[64]

The overall picture that emerges from this survey of the disdained and frequently dubious statistics is one of very considerable growth in the W.E.A. class programme during its first forty years. In the beginning the greatest commitment and fastest growth was in tutorial classes, but between the wars expansion was more rapid in courses which were shorter and did not involve regular study or written work on the part of the students. It is now necessary to investigate what this meant in terms of the standard of education provided by the W.E.A., bearing in mind that the Association's original purpose was to make university education available to all.

It is not possible to measure the extent to which courses achieved "university standard," as defined in terms of objectivity earlier in this paper.[65] The two most important assessments of the standard of the early tutorial classes significantly declined to presume a definition of "university standard."[66] But both these reports and other comments generally agree that despite the difficulty of definitions and the rather different nature of adult education and tutorial class students, compared with undergraduates and their full-time studies, the general standard of the early tutorial classes conformed to the best standard of university work.[67] What is measurable is the opportunity afforded the students, given their generally inadequate previous educational background, to develop the intellectual abilities necessary for rigorous academic work. Such opportunity derived from the combination of good teaching, a high level of commitment on the part of the students, supervised study outside the class meetings, and above all, sufficient time for the development in conceptual thinking to take place. There was little doubt in the minds of the pioneers of the tutorial class movement that it would take considerable time for students with only limited formal educational experience to master the skills necessary for serious academic work: the ability to take notes, to read critically and selectively, to analyse the subject material logically, and to express their meaning clearly. This groundwork was an essential basis for serious study and could only be obtained in a long course. If courses were really to start at an appropriate level for working class people who had enjoyed little previous education, and attain a level which conformed to the best standards of university work, then there had to be sufficient time. This was the original reason for extending the tutorial classes over three years, and no later rationalisations of shorter courses could alter the situation.

The quality of teaching is as difficult as all other standards to measure, and has always been variable. It was usually considered essential that tutorial class

tutors should be fully qualified university lecturers, in close contact with the critical atmosphere of academic life. Academic standards were thus expected to be guaranteed, because there was no apparent reason to suppose that the work such tutors undertook in the evenings with extramural classes would be in any way inferior to their day-time work with intramural students. Although ignoring many other equally important factors, not least the capabilities and commitment of the students, this idea led to the claim that any course taken by university staff must be of university standard.[68]

The early tutorial classes were formally divided into one hour of lecture and one hour of discussion. If the standard of the lecture varied according to the quality of the tutor, the level of class discussion was even more variable, depending not only on the tutor's guidance but also on the ability of the students to grasp the essential ideas from the lecture, to diagnose them, and to discuss them cogently. This was a demanding ordeal for students, especially in the early stages of a course; the discussion periods generally failed to fulfill the functions of a seminar and required greater direction from the tutor. Such rather unsatisfactory formal division of lecture and discussion was gradually abandoned in favour of more suitably flexible teaching methods.[69]

Much has been said of the quality and commitment of the early students; of the pledges they made and the work they undertook.[70] Because there was considerable competition to be accepted for these first tutorial classes, it is probably true that the students were of particularly high quality and motivation. As the movement expanded and this first cream had been absorbed, something of the original quality may well have been lost.[71] However, even the earliest reports on tutorial classes throw some doubt on the generally accepted picture. If the students' enthusiasm is measured in terms of how many honoured their pledge to attend regularly throughout the three years of the course, then only some 50 percent did so even in those first few years when it was possible to pick the best of the applicants. There were very good reasons for this "wastage" of students, not least the effects of overtime, which decimated some classes. It is doubtful whether the attendance record for tutorial classes has ever improved on these early days, but it is important to realise that the problem of loss of students over three years has always been significant. The problem was partially resolved by adding students from a reserve class. Indeed, at first this action was regarded as a useful broadening of the class, but it was found difficult to absorb the added students without disrupting the original class. The practice continued purely as an administrative convenience for maintaining sufficient numbers.[72]

On the subject of written work, Headlam and Hobhouse wrote in their special report in 1910, "This is of course one of the most important parts, if not the most important part, of the whole scheme." The pledge to write an essay every fortnight was regarded as one of the very cornerstones of the tutorial class. Students were expected not merely to listen and react to stimulating lectures, but to take notes on what was said, go home and analyse their notes and other information gleaned from books, and then marshal the facts and ideas into a rational answer to a particular question. These were not unpleasant tasks designed to try students as a test of their fitness, but an essential part of their learning process -- probably "the most important part." There is no doubt that although the standard of work was very uneven, as it is with almost any group of students, a vast amount of good written work was done. But it is necessary to explode one myth -- although "on the whole the essays were done with very fair regularity," the pattern of one a fortnight was never achieved. The first three annual reports of the Central Joint Advisory Committee on tutorial classes recorded the number of essays completed. One or two classes managed to average nine essays per student per year, but the overall average was more in the region of six essays per student. Mansbridge, who was so proud of the twelve-essay pledge, himself admitted that equivalents had to be accepted in lieu of essays. He also advocated a lesson by a tutorial class student to a reserve or pioneer class as "an admirable substitute for an essay," but he rejected "mere fragments or answers to questions" as alternatives to essay work. After its third report, the Joint Committee significantly altered the statistics to the more ambiguous "number of students doing satisfactory essay work" so it was no longer possible to determine the quantity of work done. In any case, as the Headlam/Hobhouse report indicated, "quality and fullness should be taken into consideration as well as the actual number of essays." There is no doubt tutors took this eminently sensible advice from the very beginning, and that the quality varied enormously.[73]

Apart from this more flexible approach to essay requirements, various difficulties reduced the quantity and quality. Students found a real difficulty in expressing their thoughts on paper and could be put off by the demands of an unsympathetic tutor. The problem was, as it has remained, "how to explain what essay-writing means to people whom it frightens away from the idea of a class." Even if the students had sufficient confidence to make the attempt, they frequently lacked the time, the opportunity for quiet concentrated work at home, and the access to necessary books. Many attempts were made to overcome the book supply problem, and many students laboured with great effort to read, but there was no real substitute

for the convenience of access to a good academic library. Another difficulty was the lack of time available for tutors to discuss students' written work adequately with them. For all these reasons, it is not surprising that actual achievement in terms of written work fell somewhat short, even in the earliest days, of the idealised picture of every student toiling away by the midnight oil while his family slept, and handing in a scintillating essay regularly once a fortnight. To say such things in no way belittles the real efforts and achievements of the students during the first two decades of tutorial classes.[74]

After the First World War the tendency grew to play down the importance of written work. Two decades later, it was reported by the W.E.A. Educational Advisory Committee that although the best classes still produced written work comparable with the best of the pioneer classes, the (rather thin) evidence indicated that in many other tutorial classes little or merely token written work was required.[75]

The amendments to the grant regulations already mentioned meant, in effect, an easing of the demands made upon students with regard to the length of time they were expected to study and the amount of reading and written work they were expected to do. This, together with the general switchover to shorter courses, could only mean a gradual lowering of academic standards. Not all the courses suffered in this way, by any means, but the trend was away from emphasis on high standards towards the provision of a greater quantity of more popular courses.[76] By the third and fourth decades of the Association's history, there were far more students than in the early days, but most of them were receiving a much more elementary form of adult education than the "university education" originally regarded as an essential justification for the Association's existence. This was the assessment made by R.H. Tawney in 1948:

> The main effort of the Association down to 1914, and indeed after the first world war, down to about 1925, was devoted to organising tutorial classes, and such classes, with the exacting standards that they implied, were regarded as the Association's distinctive contribution . . . In recent years the W.E.A. has been much criticised . . . on the ground that it demands from the unsophisticated worker intellectual standards of an inhuman rigour. The valid --and very serious-- criticism is precisely the opposite. It is that, in its eagerness to increase the number of classes and students, it has steadily relaxed the demands which it makes upon them. It started with the idea . . . that ordinary

men and women working in the day in manual occupations can do work of high intellectual quality, and of persuading them to undertake it. It did so, not by minimising the exacting character of the demands which it made on them, but by emphasising it . . . Doubtless that attitude still exists; but there is too much running of classes for all and sundry, and of begging people to join them whether they mean business or not. In my view, they should be told that, unless they are prepared to live up to exacting commitments, they had better keep away . . . As things have worked out in many areas, short classes have not been a preparation, or supplement to, tutorial classes, but a substitute for them, a substitute attended by students of whom many would probably have been in a tutorial class if the softer option had not been offered. And this change has taken place, not by any deliberate act of policy on the part of the W.E.A. but through, in most cases, a mere following of the line of least resistance.[77]

If a certain lack of resistance to easier options had gradually weakened the W.E.A.'s allegiance to one of its founding principles, what of the other fundamental one: that it should address itself to the particular needs of the working class? Tawney's letter (quoted above) touches on the point frequently argued, that insistence on university standards deterred the workers from joining W.E.A. classes. It is true, indeed a truism, that if an easier route is offered with promises of the same results, then a majority of people, whatever their social class, will choose the easier option. But there is no real evidence to suggest that working class people were any more reluctant than the middle classes to accept the rigours of a more sustained course once the greater potential of such courses had been fully explained. What seems much more likely is that some working class potential students were alienated by the W.E.A./University image of non-political, objective/neutral education as an academic retreat from the preparation for social change that they were seeking. They believed it was impossible for the W.E.A. to combine this neutrality with a genuine offer of education for social, economic, and political emancipation which would equip them for the class struggle. This is certainly what the Plebs League and the N.C.L.C. argued. However, this ivory tower image of the W.E.A. was not altogether justified. As already explained earlier in this paper, a whole body of men and women within the W.E.A. did believe it was possible to reconcile the quest for objective education with the interests of the working class, and this belief provided the W.E.A. with its main dynamic for many years. The federal structure of the Association, with its real strength in

the branches and districts rather than the centre, meant that it developed a rather different ethos and practice in different areas, and the dynamic of education for social change was certainly to be found in some parts of the country.[78]

A significant evaluation of its function in society was made by the W.E.A. in 1943 in a report on its "Service to Democracy since 1918," presented "as evidence that the real value of workers' education is determined by the extent to which it leads to social activity outside the classroom."[79] This was no ivory tower detachment. To many working class people the W.E.A. did seem relevant to their wider aspirations. Certainly the W.E.A. made intense efforts to attract working class students, particularly through the Trade Union Movement. In 1919, in conjunction with the Iron and Steel Trades Confederation and the Union of Post Office Workers, it founded the Workers' Educational Trade Union Committee (W.E.T.U.C.) to foster links between the W.E.A. and the unions. Under W.E.T.U.C. arrangements, unions contributed funds directly to the W.E.A., and their members were then permitted to attend courses and weekend schools free of charge. It was thereby hoped to draw many more trade unionists into W.E.A. classes. The Plebs League and N.C.L.C. certainly regarded this policy as a direct threat to their own attempts to obtain trade union support. The W.E.T.U.C. was very much the creation of G.D.H. Cole, who believed closer co-operation with the Trade Union Movement was the W.E.A.'s best hope of remaining a working class organisation. Six years after W.E.T.U.C.'s formation, he was claiming that the trade unions were at last showing serious interest, but he was still very critical of the W.E.A.'s failure to make the most of the opportunities afforded by the W.E.T.U.C. to attract more trade unionists. The next year the general strike and then its demoralising aftermath somewhat distracted the trade unions from the scheme. During the next two decades the number of unions in the W.E.T.U.C. increased to thirty-four, but it was not always easy to convert this official blessing into rank-and-file participation. In fact, the number of local trade union and other working class affiliations to the W.E.A. at branch level declined during this period. Moreover, the emphasis in the W.E.T.U.C. was increasingly on "informal activities of the discussion group and study circle and one-day-school type of course," although lip service continued to be paid to "the Tutorial and similar forms of classes as the most unique achievement in working class education."[80]

How successful was the W.E.A. in its undoubted attempts to attract working class students? Mansbridge's fears of a middle class take-over have already been mentioned. He noted that some tutorial classes already contained large numbers of non-manual workers as early

as 1913, principally in London and Manchester where clerical workers were especially numerous. Many classes already included also a sprinkling of teachers.[81] However, the question of "how many workers" is dogged by the difficulties of defining social class. If, like Mansbridge, we include clerical workers, then the proportion of working class students will obviously be higher than if we restrict the term to manual workers. When the W.E.A. was first formed, there was little doubt about what was meant by "working class": clearly associated with the trade union and co-operative movements, working men's clubs, the Labour Party, manual work, public elementary education, and cheap housing. The working classes could be identified by their speech, their dress, even the food they ate. But gradually the twentieth century has blurred if not eradicated such social differentials.

While one form of definition derives from a subjective conglomerate of a number of such characteristics, another, officially adopted by the W.E.A. in 1948, equates workers with the "educationally underprivileged," meaning those people whose full-time schooling finished at, or soon after, the minimum school leaving age. This definition has the merit of allowing one fairly standardised form of analysis to be made. A more Marxist definition of working class, embracing all those who do not control the means of production, would result in a rather different and in some ways more flattering analysis. In fact, the statistics that we have are based on students' occupations. They do not provide a very accurate picture of the social class of the W.E.A. students-- there are too many grey areas, most obviously among the white-collar workers and the housewives whose social class can only be guessed at. However, these statistics do show a significant decline in the proportion of manual workers among W.E.A. students in England and Wales between 1931/2 and 1946/7 and a corresponding increase in all other categories.[82]

Occupational Analysis of W.E.A. Students: England & Wales

Percentage of All Classified Students

	Manual Workers	Clerical, Shop & Postal Workers, etc.	Teachers, Social & Professional Workers	Domestic & Home Duties	Miscellaneous
1931/2	33	23	14	23	7
1946/7	22	27	15	27	10

Even accepting the unsatisfactory nature of the statistics, they do confirm Mansbridge's fear that the W.E.A. would prove "congenial to the general adult mind" and become increasingly dominated by the middle class. Despite its real attempts after 1919 to work with and through the Trade Union Movement, the Association was gradually losing its claim to be a specifically working class organisation. This was equally true in Australia and New Zealand, where the W.E.A. was attracting a general cross-section of the population even in the 1920s.[83]

If there had been a significant modification of, or failure to live up to, the founding principles of the Association after forty years, perhaps this should have been seen as a healthy ability to change with the times. It has certainly been argued that the growth of secondary schools after the passing of the important 1902 Education Act led to such an improvement in the State educational system of England and Wales that it was no longer necessary to provide a special highway to further educational opportunities in later life specifically for the working class. There was a very considerable increase in the number of pupils attending secondary schools between 1914-24 and a steady if lower rate of increase during the next decades.

The proportion of ten-eleven year-old children in public elementary schools who transferred to a secondary school rose from 13 to 16.8 percent between 1925-37. But nearly 85 percent of the total school population aged eleven-fifteen still remained in elementary schools. In fact, the vast majority of these pupils left school at the earliest opportunity, partly because few elementary schools had anything to offer fourteen-fifteen year-olds and partly because financial assistance towards fees and maintenance was only given to the scholarship children who had passed to the secondary schools. The result was that over 70 percent of children received no further education of any kind after the age of fourteen. That fact alone meant there was every possible need for the W.E.A. to continue the work it had begun some forty years earlier. Moreover, of the luckier children who gained secondary school places, only 15 percent remained at school beyond fifteen years of age, and the proportion and number of pupils doing so was actually declining somewhat in the later 1930s. So also was the number going on to university. Some 3,865 pupils proceeded from State secondary schools to university in 1932, representing 8.1 percent of the school-leavers of sixteen and over. By 1937 the figure had fallen to 3,035 (5.4 percent). This represents, of course, an infinitesimal fraction of the whole age group, as all but a handful had dropped out of the educational system long before. And with the now generally recognised bias of the selection procedures throughout the school system in favour of

middle class children, the opportunities for working class children to reach university were virtually non-existent.[84]

The need to make university education available for the working class in later life was just as real in the 1940s as it was in 1903. The question was not the need, but the W.E.A.'s willingness or suitability to undertake the task. After passage of the 1944 Education Act which, among many other things, obliged Local Education Authorities to ensure an adequate provision of adult education in their localities, it was argued that L.E.A.'s could and should take over the functions of the W.E.A. However, there was no reason to suppose that these Authorities would show any particular interest in providing the kind of working class education for which the W.E.A. had been founded and every reason to suppose that they would concentrate on more popular, less demanding, and less controversial courses. If the W.E.A. kept to its original purpose, and did not try to emulate the L.E.A.'s as providers of popular adult education for the general public, there was every reason why the Association should survive and thrive in the post-War world.[85]

Although it has been shown that the W.E.A. deviated from its original purpose, in some ways quite markedly, during the first four decades of its life, it is also important to emphasise the impact it did have on the lives of many, many people. Quantification is extremely difficult, but current investigations of W.E.A. branch records point to a wealth of activity, commitment, and fervour at branch level during the 1920s and '30s.[86] There seems little reason to doubt the claim made in 1949 that the W.E.A. had permanently altered the tastes, the standards of judgment, and the capacity to think independently and responsibly of many of its students; and that the W.E.A. improved their ability to further the causes in which they were interested.[87] Some measure of this influence was made in an interesting "consumers' view of adult education" based on 538 students' replies to a questionnaire about the effects of adult education on their lives, published in 1936.[88] It is not truly representative of a cross-section of W.E.A. students because the survey included 128 Ruskin College students (or ex-students) as well as 410 tutorial class students, but did not cover students from other W.E.A. classes. However, it throws some light on the way tutorial classes influenced those who attended them. It confirms the view just quoted that the courses had two distinct but not necessarily exclusive consequences-- personal development and fulfillment which enriched the participants' lives in some way, and preparation for social or political service.

The vast majority of respondents in the survey claimed to be happier as a result of their adult education experience for various reasons. The acquisition of new

ways of thinking, learning, and reasoning led to a better understanding of the world, of other people, or of themselves. The knowledge gained led to new interests or the ability to take a more active part in life. A few claimed vocational advancement as a further benefit, but this was a minor effect. More general was the "feeling of belonging," fellowship, and friendship derived from their classes. Some found the courses a welcome escape or respite from the routine of daily life, while others more positively claimed greater confidence to do things -- for example, to write letters or articles for local and national newspapers, trade journals, trade-union papers or political periodicals, or to undertake some literary work or academic research. Many W.E.A. students were prepared or stimulated by their courses to become "active citizens." A survey carried out in the autumn of 1938 (although incomplete and taking no account of work for trade unions, political parties, or cultural and social organisations), revealed widespread public activity among past and present W.E.A. students. In the sixteen W.E.A. districts surveyed, the students included fifteen members of Parliament, almost 1,800 in various levels of local government, 250 magistrates, 165 managers or governors of schools, and more than 100 in other forms of public service.[89] A similar investigation of trade union and political party lists of personnel would undoubtedly reveal a corresponding participation by W.E.A. students in those fields. In 1945 fourteen members of the new Labour Government had close associations with the W.E.A.[90]

The impact on students' family life was varied: some discovered mutual interests resulting in strengthened family relationships, but others suffered a deviation of interests which caused resentment. Many women in particular (probably because of the greater isolation they experienced, compared with their working husbands) testified to the new vistas which adult education had brought to their lives.

But the effects were not all to the good. Some people found themselves less happy because of their greater awareness of the enormity of social problems and the difficulty of alleviating them, while others lost confidence as their previous certainties were undermined and confused by an all-pervading objectivity. For example:

> The material given might have been good and sound, but it was not inspired or inspiring. In the discussions, the tutor never had any definite points of view, and seemed to restrain those who wanted to go to the left or the right. The student rapidly gained the idea that no problem was capable of solution, that there was so much to be said on all sides of a problem

> that one should take no action at all. It was only fools who gave adherence to a party, or had plans of action for changing the status quo.[91]

This balancing of all arguments into a sterile neutrality was the very result so many people had foreseen and feared. It was the university influence that Ramsay Macdonald and many others had warned the workers to beware; the effect the Establishment still most approved:

> It should not be forgotten that W.E.A. classes have equipped thousands of workers of all kinds to approach contemporary social and economic problems with the critical objectivity of the student rather than the impassioned prejudice of the agitator.[92]

The dilemma of reconciling this educational objectivity with the wishes of many students to better equip themselves for their political activities was always present, but was not totally inhibiting. As we have seen, a strong body of opinion in the W.E.A. favouring education for social purpose provided the Association with its main dynamic. How this opinion was interpreted varied very considerably from district to district, branch to branch, and even class to class. Despite the suspicions of the Plebs League and the N.C.L.C. that the W.E.A. was controlled by the State, in practice neither the State nor the W.E.A. had adequate machinery to monitor all that was being taught under the Association's auspices. Teachers enjoyed a very considerable de facto independence in offering a great variety of courses in a variety of ways. Some undoubtedly concentrated on widening the horizons of the students as a means of enriching their personal lives, but many others heightened social and political consciousness and encouraged the students to take a more active part in social and political affairs. In theory the students learned <u>why</u> they should do so rather than <u>how</u>, but in practice the dividing line between these concepts is very thin or invisible and must have been frequently crossed.

Nevertheless, in the last resort, the W.E.A. did operate within accepted confines. Its dependence on State finance and University teaching resources meant that revolution as opposed to reform was severely frowned upon. It was possible to countenance some Marxist theories, provided these were always heavily outbalanced by "orthodox" ones. If its education had any lasting influence at all on students (and there is no reason to doubt that it had), then the W.E.A. played a significant part in restricting the promulgation of Marxist theory among the British working class (and to a lesser extent in Australasia). In fact, it is arguable that the W.E.A.'s chief influence on the working class was not that it

seduced many of its leaders and activists from loyalty to their class, but that it encouraged them to think in terms of non-Marxist politics.

(4) The W.E.A. in a Changing Society, 1946-1976

The W.E.A. entered the post-War era in a mood of optimism. Just as the Oxford reformers of Edwardian England had conceived it as their job to educate the leaders of the growing Labour Movement, so now the W.E.A. believed it could play an important role in preparing people for the greater democratic participation in the affairs of the nation expected under the new Labour Government.[93] If working class people were to be fully prepared to play their part in this new society, then it was felt that there was still much more educational work to be done. Although improvements in the school educational system emanated from the 1944 Education Act, later surveys revealed that many children, particularly working class children, were still missing vital educational opportunities at school.[94] But although the growing needs for education in post-war society were not being adequately met by the schools, the W.E.A. did not achieve the rapid expansion which had been anticipated. By the mid-fifties the Association was faced with the realisation that its post-War optimism was not being translated into a great increase in demand for its courses, although some growth had taken place. The reason for this disappointing progress was generally believed to be the increasing competition from University extramural departments and Local Education Authority further education programmes. The W.E.A. seemed to be brought increasingly into collision with these other adult education agencies as they expanded from their narrower specialised bases into more general provision, while the Association also adopted the role of a more universal provider. The demarcation between the various bodies was becoming blurred, squeezing the W.E.A. into a tight corner.[95]

After the War the universities began to plan the expansion of their extramural provision. Four of the five existing universities without extramural departments established them during 1946 or 1947, leaving only the University of Reading without one. Even more significantly, the post-War extramural departments were not inclined to maintain their historical dependence on the W.E.A. for organising their courses. In 1946 probably 90 percent of university adult education was still organised by the W.E.A. But in 1948 the Universities Council for Adult Education issued a statement of principles declaring that extramural departments should be free to make their services available to any groups or bodies capable of providing suitable students. "They cannot . . . regard their services as available exclusively to any one organisation or section of the community." The knot tying university adult education to the W.E.A. and the working class was

being loosened. Non-W.E.A. university extramural provision began to expand very rapidly. Within a decade less than half the universities' adult education programmes were organised through the W.E.A., and by 1961/2 only 43 percent.[96]

To make matters worse for the W.E.A., soon after the War it became clear that the universities were going to take advantage of the flexibility of the 1946 grant regulations (which, as previously mentioned, abolished the last distinctions between the work considered appropriate for universities and for other Responsible Bodies) to expand rapidly in all directions and to enter fields hitherto regarded as the preserve of the W.E.A. In particular, they began to embark on a massive expansion of one-year and shorter courses indistinguishable from the W.E.A.'s own classes. During the late forties there was little problem in accommodating both university and W.E.A. programmes, but in the more difficult early fifties, when adult education was faced with cuts in grant aid, the W.E.A. began to feel seriously threatened. By 1954 there was an undisguised conflict. The W.E.A. complained to the Ashby Committee reviewing adult education organisation and finance that some extramural departments were undermining it, while some of the extramural departments favoured a partial dissolution of the partnership between the Association and the universities, each going its own way. The Ashby Committee considered that "the main initiative at present lies with the university extramural departments." Indeed, the Committee did seriously consider recommending the dissolution of the W.E.A. itself (by withdrawal of grant aid) and was possibly only prevented from doing so by the forceful advocacy of one of its members. The alterations in the grant regulations after 1954 did nothing to reduce the possibilities for collision between the universities and the W.E.A.[97]

These possibilities for clashes between the universities and the W.E.A. can be illustrated by the fact that in England the number of university three-year courses rose by a mere 17 percent between 1945/6 and 1961/2, compared with an increase of 156 percent in university one-year courses and 254 percent in shorter courses provided by the universities. By the 1960s several universities had programmes in which the majority of their courses did not specifically require any work by the students. Some three-fifths of university adult education consisted of such courses, lasting less than one year. Nothing distinguished them from W.E.A. short courses. Moreover, the very substantial gain in financial resources which the universities had obtained from the government through the Department of Education and the University Grants Committee had greatly reduced the relative value of the resources the W.E.A. could marshal. The Association not unjustifiably felt itself threatened by the universi-

ties using their prestigious position in society and their growing financial resources to compete in the same adult education market.[98]

The better financial climate of the 1960s gave rise to another general expansion of adult education, which helped to obscure this competition, but neither the threat nor the underlying resentment of the universities has altogether disappeared, and both are beginning to emerge again in a new era of financial stringency and grant reductions.

Another university development which impinged upon the W.E.A. was the establishment of the Open University in 1969, to offer part-time degree courses for adults. Twenty-five thousand students enrolled for the first session in 1971, studying with the help of correspondence assignments, radio and T.V. programmes, tutorials, and weekend and summer residential courses. In 1974 there were 52,000 applicants, 20,000 of whom were admitted. Although demanding more effort than most W.E.A. courses, the Open University does attract some of the more seriously-minded students who might otherwise attend a W.E.A. class.[99]

While the universities encroached upon the W.E.A.'s field of activities from one direction, the Local Education Authorities (L.E.A.'s) did so from another. The 1944 Education Act converted a previous L.E.A. power into a duty to secure the provision in their area of adequate further education facilities.[100] During the first five years after the War, the L.E.A.'s fulfilled this duty in a variety of ways, including a rapid expansion of social and recreational adult education organised by evening institutes, the number rising from just over 5,000 in 1947 to almost 11,000 by 1950. Their growth, like that of the university extramural departments and the W.E.A., was checked in the early fifties by financial stringency, but at the same time these institutes were moving more into the field of non-vocational adult education. This was partly a result of the extension of full-time schooling and other forms of further education for school leavers, and arose partly from the preference of some heads of institutes to be directly responsible for such work, instead of relying on other bodies. In 1954 the Ashby Committee reported that the L.E.A.'s had "a lively interest in liberal adult education," and that the uneasy co-operation between them and the Responsible Bodies sometimes erupted into mutual distrust. There was a feeling among some Local Authority people that the L.E.A.'s could now undertake the work of the W.E.A. This was reflected in the evidence submitted by the Association of Education Committees, calling for abolition of the direct grant to the W.E.A., which it proposed should become merely a recruiting agency for courses provided by the L.E.A.'s. However, this view was not generally held

and was rejected by the Ashby Committee, at least for the present time, "provided that voluntary bodies prove themselves equal to their responsibilities." There was an implied threat that the arrangement could be changed sometime in the future, and the Committee also felt that L.E.A.'s should take every opportunity to liberalise their provision. Thus, during the first decade after the War there had certainly been some increase in L.E.A. provision of liberal adult education, which the W.E.A. considered its special interest, and there was every prospect that this trend would persist.[101]

During the last two decades, the L.E.A.'s expansion of their adult education provision has continued. In 1968/9, nearly 1.7 million adults over the age of eighteen (about five percent of the adult population of England and Wales) attended L.E.A. classes. This was some six times the number in all university extramural and W.E.A. classes combined. Although domestic subjects, physical activities, arts and crafts, music and drama, foreign languages, and practical activities still account for 80 or 90 percent of the programmes of most L.E.A.'s, there is an ever-growing provision of liberal academic subjects. Many L.E.A. tutors and administrators are anxious to expand in this sphere, and indeed, some have been appointed specifically for this purpose. This has given rise to a feeling of insecurity within the W.E.A. and increased the problem of defining the distinctive role of the Association as it evolved from a working class movement into a general provider of liberal adult education for the same general public as the L.E.A.'s.[102]

A third post-War development which has significantly affected the W.E.A. is the changing attitude of the trade union movement to adult education. Immediately after the War the W.E.A. considered trade union education as "one of the most important aspects of W.E.A. work," and the Trades Union Congress (T.U.C.) preferred to rely on the W.E.A. and N.C.L.C. to provide this education rather than to establish a T.U.C. education committee to do the job. Trade union affiliations to the W.E.A. increased during the post-War years and so did the courses organised by the Association through the Workers' Educational Trade Union Committee (W.E.T.U.C.). In 1949 the W.E.A. established Trade Union Advisory Committees in each district to promote more trade union education and began to appoint organisers specifically for this task. Fourteen such appointments had been made by 1951, financially supported by the W.E.T.U.C.[103]

The W.E.A. continued to lay great store by its work with trade unionists. In 1953 its working party on Trade Union Education concluded that "the basic aims and purposes of the W.E.A. require that it should give a clear priority to the educational needs of the Trade Union Movement,"[104] and favoured closer liason with the trade

unions, as well as more trade union education. Following the working party's report, three pilot schemes were set up in the industrial areas of South Wales, Cleveland, and Tyneside, to investigate ways in which these aims could be achieved. Six years later, the pilot schemes demonstrated that a considerable expansion in certain types of trade union education was possible with the assistance of increased resources, although there were unsolved problems in relating this work to the W.E.A. branch structure. The W.E.A. continued to show a special concern for trade union education and particularly the need to relate such education to the whole range of social studies. It was especially successful in pioneering day-release courses for trade unionists in the 1950s and 1960s. In 1969 it established a Service Centre for Social Studies to further this branch of its activities.[105]

But there were certain developments in trade union education after the War, which began to challenge the W.E.A.'s special relationship with the trade unions through the W.E.T.U.C. One was the tendency for some unions to make their own educational provision independently of any other agency, or to approach the university extramural departments to provide courses for them without the help of the W.E.A. In 1947 the T.U.C. began to make available facilities for training officials and active trade unionists, deciding in 1956 to establish its own training college. At the same time, the T.U.C. encouraged individual unions to provide such facilities for their own members, and many unions appointed full-time education officers. Others approached extramural departments directly, with the result that the number of university day-release courses began to expand after 1953.[106]

The other major development was a shift in interest on the part of the trade unions from general social and political education to a more utilitarian concern with union organisation, negotiating procedures, communication, and the specific tasks of training trade unionists to be effective officials. As the trade unions began to involve themselves more in the running of a complex modern society and economic system, they became more concerned with methods of operating the socio-economic machine than in understanding its nature. The demand was increasingly for skills in the techniques of trade unionism rather than for a wide-ranging liberal education. This switch in focus derived partly from the influence of American trade unions on their British counterparts after the War. The T.U.C. and individual unions' entry into the field of direct educational provision was very much geared towards this technical training, which offered them certain advantages over the old liberal approach. There was an undoubted need for such training at all levels of trade union officialdom; the result was a more efficient trade union bureaucracy. It was also expected that the confinement of the curriculum to technical

training would protect members from some of the disruptive influences of the more radical political ideas which crept into some liberal studies syllabuses. This put the W.E.A. in a quandary. It wanted to improve its relations with the trade unions and increase its trade union courses, but did not wish to abandon its liberal approach to education. The solution conceived was to relate the courses initially to the practical training being demanded and gradually to broaden them to cover a much wider range of liberal subjects. This approach generally proved possible, at least until the mid-sixties.[107]

In 1966 the W.E.T.U.C. was wound up and with it the W.E.A.'s freedom to determine the curricula of the trade union courses financially supported by trade union funds. The T.U.C. reversed its decision of twenty years earlier and decided to set up an Education Committee to supervise all education to which it gave financial assistance. Syllabuses were required to be submitted to the Committee for approval, even when the Responsible Body was still paying the teaching cost. Regional education officers were appointed to administer the scheme. The W.E.A. had little option but to accept the new arrangement and provided a large proportion of the scheme's courses during the first few years. In 1969 provision amounted to some 200 classes and 350 weekend schools, about half the total T.U.C. educational programme. The W.E.A. continues "to make an important contribution to the T.U.C. regional educational service," but it has quantitatively declined since 1970, while T.U.C. courses have quadrupled, because the T.U.C. prefers to work with institutions which can employ a body of staff almost fully engaged in trade union studies. Moreover, the T.U.C.'s own shop steward training scheme now far exceeds the Responsible Bodies' provision of trade union education. In 1975 the T.U.C. Education Committee's decision to cease support for weekend residential schools in favour of a multi-media scheme was a further blow to the W.E.A., which concentrated much of its effort in weekend schools.[108]

More serious was the widening gap between the W.E.A.'s concept of workers' education as concerned with "great issues of purpose, truth, justice and beauty" and the T.U.C. Education Committee's belief that "training those responsible for conducting trade union affairs in the knowledge and skills essential to conducting those affairs efficiently" was the primary object of workers' education.[109] The gradual widening of this gap over the past thirty years has made it increasingly difficult for the W.E.A. to promote trade union education, at least in its traditional way, and now faces the Association with a difficult decision, as will be explained in the next section.

The post-War expansion of the universities and L.E.A.'s into areas previously dominated by the W.E.A., and the changing nature of trade union demand, threatened the

existence of the W.E.A., so that on many occasions people questioned whether it could or should survive. Yet it has not only survived, but has some 70 percent more students in the British Isles now than it did thirty years ago. There were almost 99,000 students in 1945/6 (excluding Northern Ireland), over 167,000 in 1973/4 (including Northern Ireland), and the number of W.E.A. classes has increased from 5,301 to 9,303. This is perhaps a less rapid increase than in some areas of adult education, but it is far from extinction.

W.E.A. Provision in the British Isles 1945/6 - 1973/4 [110]

(a) Aggregate of classes and students in each of four categories.

Year	1 3-year and advanced tutorial classes		2 Sessional classes of not less than 20 meetings		3 Terminal classes of not less than 10 meetings		4 Other short courses including pioneer courses, tutor-training, day and weekend schools and single lectures	
	Classes	Students	Classes	Students	Classes	Students	Classes	Students
1945/6	651	10,729	1,500	30,016	2,026	38,209	1,224	19,775
1954/5	845	11,480	1,470	23,654	1,796	27,925	2,128	49,036
1969/70	485	8,116	2,294	39,672	2,384	41,445	3,124	72,424
1973/4	337	6,097	2,404	40,682	3,211	52,817	3,351	67,588

(b) Percentage of classes and students in each of four categories.

Year	1 3-year and advanced tutorial classes		2 Sessional classes of not less than 20 meetings		3 Terminal classes of not less than 10 meetings		4 Other short courses (as above)	
	Classes	Students	Classes	Students	Classes	Students	Classes	Students
1945/6	12.0	10.7	28.0	30.4	38.0	38.7	22.5	20.2
1954/5	13.5	10.25	22.5	21.0	28.75	25.0	34.2	43.5
1969/70	6.0	5.0	27.5	24.5	29.0	25.5	37.5	45.0
1973/4	3.5	3.5	26.0	24.5	34.5	31.5	36.0	40.5

The most obvious change which has taken place in W.E.A. provision over the past thirty years, apart from its growth, is the greater preponderance of short courses, particularly if looked at in terms of the numbers of students attending courses. Indeed, for the past two decades, more than 40 percent of all W.E.A. students have attended courses of less than ten weeks' duration. Meanwhile, the longer courses, particularly the tutorial classes, continued to decline in significance. It was shown in section (3) that tutorial class students as a percentage of all W.E.A. students fell from approximately 20 percent during the 1930s to 8 percent in the War, and then rose to about 11 percent after the War. They remained at about that level during the next decade, but have since declined to a mere 3.5 percent. However, even this figure masks what has happened in most parts of the country, because nearly three-quarters of all W.E.A. tutorial classes are now concentrated in just two of the twenty-one W.E.A. districts (London and Yorkshire North). These two districts have increased their tutorial classes during the last decade, but elsewhere such classes represent a negligible part of the W.E.A. programme, there being none at all in eight districts.[111]

After the War the Association still considered one of its principal aims to be to extend the provision of tutorial classes, and continued to "put its faith in the tutorial class as the chief instrument of liberal adult education."[112] But by the mid-fifties it was widely argued that the changing nature of society and improvements in full-time educational opportunities made it impractical and unnecessary to maintain the preeminence of the tutorial class. In 1960 a W.E.A. working party fully concurred with this view, despite the fact that evidence was by then emerging to show that the 1944 Education Act had not succeeded in creating adequate educational opportunities for large numbers of working class children. Economic stringency had helped to reduce the tutorial classes in the early fifties, but when resources became more plentiful again by the end of the decade they were ploughed into the provision of one-year and shorter courses. Since then almost everywhere the tutorial classes have been given low priority and allowed to decline. The W.E.A. nationally claims to regret this outcome, but it now also contends that other forms of study, such as day-release courses and linked weekend schools, are just as exacting.[113] This claim, of course, is only true if such forms of study make equal demands on the students in terms of reading and written work, and offer them sufficient time to develop their learning skills so that they are able to undertake a high standard of academic work.

Beyond the United Kingdom the W.E.A. has fared less well since the War. Only in Australasia has it maintained a significant role, and even there, only in some places.

It continues to exist in only two Australian states, New South Wales and South Australia, apart from a small group in Tasmania which meets about ten times a year to hear a series of lectures. In N.S.W. the W.E.A. has maintained close links with the University of Sydney; they jointly promoted 208 classes (mostly in Sydney) plus 510 discussion courses during 1975, together with various other adult education activities. The term "tutorial class" is applied indiscriminately to any kind of evening class for the general public: three-year tutorial classes disappeared in the 1920s and were only reintroduced in 1966. There were twenty-two such classes in 1975, accounting for some 5 percent of the students. In South Australia the W.E.A. provides a more wide-ranging programme of practical and recreational courses, such as the L.E.A.'s would promote in Britain. After a nadir in Australian adult education in the mid-sixties, there has been widespread development by the universities, the colleges of advanced education, and the State departments of further education, but the W.E.A. does not figure prominently in these developments.[114]

In New Zealand the W.E.A. has continued to play a modest part in the provision of adult education, without showing any real post-War growth. The number of students in 1967 was no more than the 8,705 enrolled in 1946. The three-year tutorial class has been completely abandoned and most courses are quite short.[115]

It is now frequently argued that the continued decline of the tutorial classes has not led to a diminution of academic standards because in the post-War welfare society, there is no longer an under-educated working class that needs to start learning in adult life at an elementary level. It is now legitimate to launch straight into the subject as if the students are all university undergraduates, or even graduates. Ironically, the argument is usually put by the same people who complain that educational standards in schools have declined since the hey-day of the selective grammar school system. In fact, as mentioned earlier, it is now becoming quite apparent that the welfare society has not solved the problem of unequal educational opportunities, and that, despite the widespread conversion to comprehensive schools, there are still many children leaving full-time education with very little to show for it. It is likely that some of them will (like their parents and grandparents earlier in the century) decide at a later stage in their lives that they want to make good some of their missed educational opportunities. The W.E.A. will not be able to satisfy them if it is offering exclusively short courses which can only lay claim to a reasonable academic standard by assuming all the students have some previous knowledge of the subject and educational know-how, and therefore starting way above the level of the educationally under-

privileged. These short courses must either do this or start and finish at a very low academic level.

In fact, the preponderance of short courses in recent years has forced the W.E.A. to adopt both such approaches. As will be shown later, those within the Association who still value its commitment to the working class or educationally underprivileged have been forced to advocate more elementary courses and a retreat from academic standards. Those who wish to maintain the high level of scholarship in W.E.A. courses have only been able to do so by arguing that it is perfectly legitimate in this day-and-age to provide continuing education for all sections of society, including highly academic courses for well-educated people. This has hastened the trend, already apparent before the Second World War, of the W.E.A. becoming a universal provider for the whole of society rather than confining its provision to the working class. As shown earlier, manual workers formed a decreasing proportion of all W.E.A. students: about one-third in the early 1930s and less than one-quarter by 1946. Ten years later the proportion had declined further to less than one-sixth. The relevant information about students' occupations is no longer systematically collected by the W.E.A., but there is no doubt that the trend has continued during the last two decades, although the expansion of trade union day-release work during the late fifties and early sixties slowed the process for a while.[116] In 1960 a W.E.A. working party exploded a cosy myth which the Association had clung to for many years: that the many housewives in its classes would turn out to be mainly working class if only their social class could be ascertained. A sample survey revealed that "in general married women [in W.E.A. classes] tend to come from the 'higher social categories.'"[117]

On many occasions since 1946 the W.E.A. has either represented itself as a universal provider serving "a representative cross section of the adult population" or has interpreted the term "worker" so widely as to cover almost all sections of society. "We have meant by it," wrote Tawney in 1947, "all those, whether in factory, mine, office or home, who render useful service to their fellows," and in the same pamphlet it was stated that the W.E.A. "must continue to recruit students and members widely, limiting its appeal only by the expectation that those who join in its activities share the desire of the W.E.A. for an educated democracy."[118] The Association continued to stress its concern for the "whole community"; to tender "a broad, humane adult education to all men and women who wish to take advantage of the facilities offered" and to regard itself as a "voluntary organisation for people of all kinds." In the early 1960s the Director of Adult Education at the University of Keele found the W.E.A. branches quite reluctant to become involved in specifically working class education because "as all

people worked, they were all workers." Therefore, the Keele Department of Adult Education appointed its own tutor organiser to develop working class education.[119]

In 1966 the first objective of the W.E.A.'s constitution was modified. Instead of being "To stimulate and satisfy the demands of workers for education," it became "To stimulate and satisfy the demand of adults for education," although the phrase "in particular, members of workers' movements" was added to qualify the word "adults" to mollify some opposition to the change.[120] Despite this sop, it is clear that the W.E.A. had drifted a long way from its original commitment to the working class. It was attempting to be all things to all men, a general providing body within the field of adult education. A sample survey conducted by the National Institute of Adult Education between 1966-69 did suggest that the W.E.A. still had a higher percentage of students from the lowest two socio-occupational groups than did the L.E.A.'s or extramural departments, but in many areas the social composition of W.E.A. classes did not seem to differ significantly from those of the other providing bodies.[121]

There were some people in the W.E.A. who saw that this trend would bring the Association into collision with the rapidly expanding L.E.A.'s and university extramural departments. Most influential of this faction was G.D.H. Cole, who argued in the early 1950s that "there is no room for the W.E.A. in the world of today unless it sets out to do a distinctive job of its own." He believed the W.E.A. was forced to make a choice: "It cannot be a general adult education provider and at the same time the educational representative of the working class movement."[122] In fact, as we have seen, the W.E.A. did make the choice -- to become a general adult education provider instead of being the educational representative of the working class. But it did so with a certain ambivalence and a claim that it could still concentrate on particular kinds of education and specific sections of society. One major example, as has already been mentioned, was the Association's special interest in education for trade unionists. Other fields which the W.E.A. believed appropriate to explore were the special needs of professional people, managers, young workers, young and old people, and the inhabitants of new communities such as housing estates. It also considered that the spread of television to most homes created a new educational need, while high priority should still be given to helping and encouraging W.E.A. students to participate in local government and their own social, industrial, and political organisations.[123]

Most dominant of all, since officially adopted by the W.E.A. in 1948 as an alternative to its commitment to the working class, has been the aim to provide adult education

for the "educationally underprivileged," normally interpreted as all those who left school at the minimum school-leaving age. The term "educationally underprivileged" has been preferred by most W.E.A. members to a more specific identification with the working class since 1948. Although a real concentration of effort on the requirements of the working class, whether defined in terms of manual occupation, educational disadvantage, or in any other way, has been largely avoided by the W.E.A. because it would be forced to face more realistically the choice expressed by Cole more than twenty years ago. It would mean jettisoning much of the bourgeois superstructure which has been built into the Association over the years, dismantling the many middle class dominated branches and rejecting the middle class demand for continuing education for the educationally privileged.[124] While paying much lip service to the cause of the educationally underprivileged, the Association for many years gave higher priority to its commitment to high academic standards. As explained earlier, this was not compatible with the requirements of working class education, given the preponderance of short courses. The result has been a greater proportion of educationally "privileged" people attending W.E.A. classes than in the population as a whole. In the later 1950s and early sixties only some 45 percent of the national school population was staying on at school beyond the then minimum leaving age of fifteen, but in 1960 nearly 60 percent of W.E.A. students had remained at school beyond the minimum leaving age.[125]

In 1969 the W.E.A. published a policy statement called Unfinished Business, which probably more clearly than ever before recognised the Association's dilemma that its insistence on disciplined study, scholarship, and academic standards alienated the very people it wished to serve. It saw the answer not in an abandonment of liberal education or a lowering of standards, but in improvements in the method of communicating the value of what it offered to the working class.[126] Since then, the Association has been forced to grasp the horns of this dilemma, with results that are described in the next section.

Before looking at the situation now facing the W.E.A., it is worthwhile considering how well it has maintained another of its founding principles -- its democratic participation and voluntaryism -- during the past thirty years. Although it has always been taken for granted that the voluntary contribution and participation of its members is an essential ingredient of the W.E.A., there were serious doubts expressed in the mid-fifties as to whether it still possessed this dynamic. It seemed to have lost its momentum and sense of dedication: branches had become moribund or incapable of organising and stimulating classes; membership was declining. Particularly in large towns, the job of organising adult education was felt to be beyond the capacity of the voluntary movement, and a paternalistic

professionalism was gradually taking over. University resident tutors were organising classes in the name of, but with little reference to, the W.E.A. This trend became most marked in those areas where the academic demarcation between the W.E.A. and the extramural departments was disappearing. In some districts a purely territorial division of responsibilities evolved, whereby the university organised as well as provided almost all "Responsible Body classes" in its territory, although many of them were still called W.E.A. - Joint Committee classes. As a result, some extramural departments began to feel they were carrying the W.E.A.: doing the work of the voluntary movement. Over-dependence on public funds was also believed to be weakening the Association's voluntary character, reducing it to just another public body.[127]

Some of these assessments are difficult to judge: they were sometimes unjustifiably harsh. But the W.E.A. itself recognised that its voluntary nature was something of an Achilles heel.[128] Certainly, after a post-War boom in 1946 and 1947, membership began to decline. Branch membership fell from 39,092 to 30,095 between 1947 and 1953. Numerically, it remained more steady during the later 1950s, but as a proportion of W.E.A. students it was continuing to fall. By 1956/7 less than 40 percent of the W.E.A. students belonged to the Association.[129] When a W.E.A. working party investigated the Association's structure and organisation in 1966, it found that the existing branch structure was not capable of coping with the demands made upon it. More professional assistance and regular and systematic training of voluntary officers were considered necessary.[130]

It was realised that one of the problems of the voluntary branch structure was that it tended to perpetuate existing attitudes and provision. Branch committees became self-perpetuating, inward-looking elites reluctant to break new ground and unable or unwilling to attract new types of members. "An effective W.E.A. branch is plugged into a network of people in the community . . . [which] covers a limited spectrum of the community in which the branch operates. (The larger the community, the smaller the spectrum.) The real task of development is to plug into other networks . . .," concluded the W.E.A. National Committee in 1973.[131] In a survey of nine W.E.A. District Secretaries in England, Wales, and Scotland carried out by the author in 1976, the majority considered that branches are only moderately effective in assessing the adult education needs of their local communities.

In 1966 the W.E.A. changed its constitution to admit almost all students in W.E.A. classes, as well as individual subscribers, to membership of the Association. This was an attempt to counter the decline in voluntary membership by giving all students the democratic right to par-

ticipate in W.E.A. affairs, and to encourage them to be more active participants.[132] The change aroused considerable opposition at the time, and although it is impossible to predict what would have happened to the size of membership if the measure had not been taken, it does not appear to have stimulated more active involvement and may well have weakened the very concept of voluntaryism still further, as the opponents feared and predicted.

The 1966 working party also called for the abolition of District quarterly meetings, considering them an ineffective mode of democratic participation. In their place, it recommended that more local Development Committees be established, whose "aims should be to bring in and involve as many and as wide interests as possible." Although the area committees were accepted, the proposal to abolish the District Council meetings aroused anguished protests from the established voluntary movement, and was rejected.[133] As a result, the envisaged devolution of power (particularly in financial matters) from the Districts to more participatory local representative committees has not taken place. In fact, many Development Committees ceased to function after a short time, when it was found that nothing of substance had been devolved to their level.

Three years later the W.E.A.'s policy statement Unfinished Business recognised the continued weakness of the branch structure and the necessity to strengthen the Association's voluntaryism. Despite the widening of the membership, there was still a real need to find a way of involving the many students who were not active in the branches.[134] In the survey of nine District Secretaries already referred to, one considered that less than 5 percent of W.E.A. students take an active part in the W.E.A., apart from their actual class attendance; three estimated the number to be between 5 and 10 percent and two between 10 and 30 percent, while the other three considered the answer unquantifiable. One District Secretary qualified this none-too-optimistic assessment of the voluntary movement by quoting Professor Wiltshire's evidence to the Russell Committee:

> . . . membership of the association may well mean little or nothing to most students, whose interest is likely to be in the class and the subject rather than in the organisation which provides them. But there is a steady and continually regenerating minority of students who do the day to day work of their Branches, attend committees and councils and have a real voice in policy making at all levels. Many of our established and accredited democratic institutions do no better than this and some do a good deal worse.

Almost all the District Secretaries considered that student involvement in planning and running courses was moderate to good.

In 1976 the W.E.A. undertook a national survey of 908 branches and came to the conclusion that "there is no need for alarm and despondency about the vitality of our branches but neither is there room for complacency."[135] The overall response rate to the survey was 72 percent, but branches did not reply to all the questions. Only 221 branches responded to the question about non-student subscribing membership, but it is nevertheless quite clear that since the alteration in the constitution in 1966, individual subscribing membership has become an insignificant part of the voluntary movement. Of those branches which did reply, 63 percent have less than ten such members. However, enrollment as a student now confers automatic membership in the Association. The average number of enrollments in 1975 in the 623 branches that replied was 119. But the average attendance of these members at their branch A.G.M.'s was 17 (i.e. 14 percent). The small branches tend to attract more of their members to the A.G.M.'s than the large ones, but overall it is not a picture of very active member participation. Of course, branch committees should be the more active nerve centres, but the survey reveals that only 30 percent of committees met more than four times a year. The average size of committees is nine members, of whom only 15.3 percent were newly elected in 1975. Although half of the offices (chairman, secretary, and treasurer) had changed hands during the previous four years, there was clearly no rapid renewal of committee membership. Indeed, some branches specifically expressed the need for infusion of new blood and complained about the difficulty of involving student members in W.E.A. affairs. The picture that emerges is of small, dedicated, and hard-working oligarchies running W.E.A. branches and providing a semblance of voluntaryism amidst general apathy. Moreover, the branches' involvement in the wider movement presents the same picture. Although regarded by the W.E.A. as a basic criterion for recognition as a branch, less than two-thirds of the branches attended even one of their quarterly District Council meetings. Only one branch in five managed to send a representative to all four District Council meetings in 1975. And a clear majority of branches also failed to send representatives to any of the last four biennial conferences of the Association.[136]

It has long been argued that more professional assistance is necessary to foster the voluntary movement: more organisers and organising-tutors in the field and more administrative staff in district offices have been widely regarded as essential support for the voluntary workers in an ever-more-complex field of adult education

provision. The W.E.A. and national and local government, which jointly contribute towards the salaries of the professional staff, have yielded to this pressure over the years. In 1954 the Association was operating with only thirty-six full-time tutors and eighty-two administrative and clerical workers in the whole of England and Wales. By 1966 the number of organising tutors had risen to sixty-eight (plus four in Scotland) and there were also seventeen organisers. The administrative staff then numbered seventy-six (of whom six were employed in Scotland), but this excludes clerical workers. In 1975 the total number of organising tutors was 123, three-and-a-half times the number employed twenty years previously. Although the complexities of adult education administration and the heavy demands upon the W.E.A. voluntary workers have made this growth inevitable, and this professional staff is still very small in relation to the overall size of the W.E.A. programme, nevertheless the National Committee now feels "the Association will need to review carefully the role it expects its professional workers to fulfill and the position it expects them to assume in the movement."[137] It will have to decide at what point a movement ceases to be a voluntary body and becomes a professionally-administered agency.

The growing administrative burden of running an educational organisation in close conjunction with the state system is one undoubted cause of the dwindling strength of the voluntary movement. Another more deep-seated reason is the gradual evaporation of the social purpose dynamic of the W.E.A. Despite some weakening during the 1930s, the belief that the Association should aim to be the educational arm of the Labour Movement and equip workers to take up the struggle for political, social, and economic emancipation was still strong after the Second World War:

> . . . Students are not to be regarded . . . as individuals, self enclosed in routine academic studies. Rather are they men and women busy with practical affairs who seek from their studies to refresh themselves and to extend their powers, to clarify their views of social good, and to strive to realise their ideal, through political action . . .[138]

The W.E.A. continued to declare unequivocally that it "is concerned to encourage the students in its classes to take an active part in the life of the community" and to guide them particularly in their activities in other workers' organisations, to equip them to take part in the complex affairs of a modern democratic society, and to undertake leading roles in the organisations of that society.[139]

But after the Second World War this "knowledge for power" motive became less strong among the W.E.A.'s students as a whole.[140] One possible reason was that in the full-employment welfare society of the 1950s the dynamic belief in education for social and economic change no longer seemed so relevant. It was being eroded or undermined by welfare economics and a pervasive materialism. Memories of the Depression had faded and the concept of class struggle was regarded as outdated. "We live in a society where many people find it increasingly difficult to focus social purpose and where domestic social abuses are certainly less obvious than they were in the past," commented a W.E.A. working party in 1960. The challenge to the working class had become much more subtle than the straightforward conflict of the earlier twentieth century, experienced by many of the W.E.A. pioneers. To the younger generation who should have been taking over the running of the W.E.A. in the fifties, social emancipation appeared "as meaningless as Samuel Smiles' gospel of thrift." The desire to change society was no longer the main motivating force of W.E.A. students.[141]

With the decline in the traditional dynamic of the W.E.A., the quest for personal fulfillment or "knowledge for its own sake" came gradually to predominate, especially as the W.E.A. grew more middle class and adult education came to be regarded primarily as a leisure activity. "Cultural emancipation" was accepted by many as a valid alternative to economic emancipation. Subjects such as economics, economic history, and social theory, which people like George Thompson had favoured in the 1930s because they enabled the workers to tackle the problems of society, gave way to less purposeful subjects such as archaeology, local history, and music. A survey of W.E.A. students carried out in 1960 revealed that the vast majority enrolled in classes because of their interest in education rather than from any desire to promote social improvements. Two-thirds of the sample were motivated by a specific interest in the particular subject of their class and another 15 percent by more general but still recognisably educational factors. In contrast, less than 5 percent expressed any desire to equip themselves for such purposes as trade union activity, and a mere five people (0.6 percent) showed a more general wish "to be better citizens." Although the survey also demonstrated that students often had mixed motives for joining a class, it is clear that very few did so out of a desire to change the world. The quest for personal fulfillment was the dominant motive, as the W.E.A. had acknowledged three years earlier when its National Conference passed a resolution stating its purpose as "nothing less than to preserve the individuality of man," and offering "personal emancipation from the perplexities of the age."[142]

On a number of occasions during the past two decades the W.E.A. has attempted to infuse a new, all-embracing sense of social purpose into this trend towards personal fulfillment and emancipation or "cultural individualism." In 1958 it claimed a special responsibility "for those who have suffered from deficiencies in the economic, social and educational framework, for the great majority of the population." Its aim should be to help them overcome the new problems of society, which were defined as widespread apathy and ignorance, a widening gulf between experts and ordinary citizens, a growing professionalism, and the enervating effects of mass culture. The W.E.A. should help people to face the technical, social, ethical, and political problems arising in a rapidly changing society and to equip them to be more participatory citizens through the study of relevant topics that can be related to their political activities.[143]

These objectives are one stage removed from social or political emancipation. They amount to a more neutral, objective, undynamic interpretation of social purpose, educationally valid but lacking the inspiration of the earlier commitment. In 1969 the W.E.A.'s policy statement still hankered after social relevance. Its courses should be concerned with social analysis and the major problems affecting the community. They should aim to attract "those people in the community who are concerned to analyse, to challenge and to reform . . ." In fact, the statement claimed that it is a false antithesis to set the aim of individual fulfillment in opposition to social or political emancipation. The educated individual is also of value to society and therefore both are valid objectives. The next year, in its evidence to the Russell Committee, the W.E.A. again stressed that its first purpose was to help men to attain a richer personal development and to undertake responsible social action.[144] Although they made a valiant effort to marry the cultural individualism of the majority of present-day W.E.A. students to the old dynamic, such statements, like those ten years previously, lacked something of the old fire of commitment to changing society for the benefit of the working class. In particular, it is significant that they both prefer the term "social or political responsibility" to emancipation![145]

The result of this gradual erosion of the W.E.A.'s sense of social purpose is that it has left only a vague social message with which people can identify. Most people regard the Association merely as a providing body rather than a living organisation with social aspirations and dynamic. A lack of positive identity or uniqueness of purpose has rendered it increasingly vulnerable to the encroachments of the L.E.A.'s and extramural departments in those areas of adult education that the W.E.A. once regarded as its own. The W.E.A. still needs, perhaps more than ever, to tackle one of the tasks it set itself

in 1958 -- to give its members, including new members, "the feeling that they are really joining a movement when they join the W.E.A., a socially relevant movement . . ."[146]

(5) The Present and Future Prospects

Previous pages describe the W.E.A.'s gradual drift away from a clear commitment to the social, political, and economic emancipation of the working class, towards personal fulfillment or, at the most, a compromise conjunction of the quest for knowledge-for-its-own-sake with social and political responsibility. There has nevertheless reemerged in the last decade a more urgent sense of social purpose. This was partly inspired by the publication of Unfinished Business in 1969,[147] but was beginning to find expression even before that:

> . . . Perhaps the W.E.A. should concentrate on a narrower field instead of spreading its teaching resources widely as it tends to do at the moment . . . and make special efforts to get into its classes those who are educationally deprived.[148]

By the time the Association came to present its evidence to the Russell Committee on Adult Education in 1969, it was emphasising the priority it believed should be given to the educationally deprived and socially disadvantaged, including hospital patients, prisoners, immigrants, the inhabitants of "the twilight areas of industrial cities," early school leavers, women (who had been denied equal opportunities for so long), and retired people. It also felt that social and welfare workers and industrial workers came within this area of high priority.[149] There was nothing particularly new about such commitment to the "disadvantaged" except the urgency and priority being given to it within the W.E.A., typified by the West Lancashire and Cheshire District, which appointed an organising-tutor in September 1970 to explore the potential for the W.E.A. in community adult education in the Liverpool Education Priority Area. (E.P.A.'s had recently been established by the government.) During the next two years Tom Lovett, the tutor, established a network of contacts and informal educational activities, some of them initially of a more practical nature than normal W.E.A. provision, while others were directly geared to the investigation of specific problems in the community. After two years it was felt that the project had demonstrated that the W.E.A. could make a new breakthrough in the provision of adult education for working class communities, although the process would be slow and demand substantial resources.[150]

By this time most W.E.A. districts were promoting some kind of local community project as well as a variety of courses concerned with specific social problems (including civil liberties, welfare rights, drug addiction,

and environmental studies) and directed towards the various "disadvantaged" groups enumerated above. Similar work was being done in Scotland, such as the Kincorth Project (1971-72), which investigated the needs of residents in a new housing estate in Aberdeen and revealed how disadvantaged people and the vast majority of working class people were excluded from traditional W.E.A.-type liberal education as effectively as if selected.[151] In 1973 the W.E.A. reemphasised that its priority was providing for those whose active participation in the political, social, and cultural life of the community was inhibited by educational needs.[152] In addition, as mentioned earlier, the W.E.A. continued to place high store by its contact with working class people through the trade union movement.

When it was published in 1973, the Russell Report reiterated the W.E.A.'s special concern for specific groups of underprivileged people and particularly recommended that the Association should not attempt to provide a complete range of adult education but should gradually leave some of its functions as a general provider to other bodies.[153] The Report strongly supported the W.E.A.'s own stated desire to concentrate on work for the underprivileged, as identified under four headings:

(1) Education for the socially and culturally deprived living in urban areas . . . The involvement of the W.E.A. would have to be in a strictly educational role and closely integrated with the work of other bodies. It would also have to be of an experimental and informal character, requiring new forms of activity and unfamiliar techniques.

(2) Work in an industrial context, especially classes held in factories or other workplaces, and programmes arranged in consultation with the T.U.C. and with individual trade unions, including courses for shop stewards,

(3) Political and social education. Traditionally the W.E.A. has believed that much of its work in general education was directed to greater social and political awareness as well as intellectual enlightenment. This conception we feel to have special value today. New avenues for activity have begun to appear in courses run in cooperation with OXFAM, SHELTER and similar socially oriented organisations, and in certain kinds of "role education" for those engaged in local government and in social and political activity.

(4) Courses of liberal and academic study below the level of university work, intended either for those who find that this level and kind of course satisfies their intellectual ambition, or for those who wish to prepare for the more rigorous university courses. This is the area of provision where there is the greatest likelihood of overlapping with the work of the local education authorities as academic studies come to find a place in the programmes of their centres. It is an area in which the role of the W.E.A. may gradually come to include a greater element of promotional work, encouraging and supporting balanced programmes by local education authorities as well as making provision of its own.[154]

Precise definitions of the priority areas outlined in the Russell Report have proved "open to varying interpretations" according to the particular interest of the interpreter, as the W.E.A. wryly noted in 1976.[155] This problem arises very largely from the fate of the Report. Its many recommendations were based on what it considered a modest and realistic assumption that national public expenditure on adult education would be more than doubled during the following five to seven years, from 17.4 million pounds p.a. to 40.65 million pounds (1968/9 prices).[156] But since 1973 many of the recommendations have been partially acted upon or enforced on an ad hoc basis, while the government has imposed an actual decrease in expenditure in real prices. This has led to some biased interpretations of several of the Report's recommendations or judicious [illegible]ing of certain related paragraphs.

However, despite specific difficulties in interpreting exactly what is meant by the four priority areas laid down by the Russell Report, the W.E.A. cannot complain about the general meaning, as that publication reflects very closely its own evidence submitted to the Committee.[157] The Report envisaged that the W.E.A. would forge closer links with Local Authority social services and community associations and many other local and national groups. At the same time, there would be a further weakening of the traditional links with the universities, although it was not recommended that this work should altogether cease. These were trends which had been apparent in the Association for some years and have continued since publication of the Report.[158]

During 1974/5 there was an increase of W.E.A. manpower and other resources devoted to education for the socially and culturally deprived, and in the following year, all the districts in England and Wales claimed a substantial increase in their "Russell-type work." Thirteen new tutor-organisers were appointed during these

two years, all of them to work in the priority areas. Similar developments have taken place in Scotland following the recent publication of the Alexander Report on Adult Education there. Much of this work, particularly in "political and social education," is identical with the W.E.A.'s traditional liberal studies provision, although some of the curriculum emphasises more explicitly the concern with political and community action. The continued interest in trade union education, particularly through the T.U.C. education scheme, has already been described. It is the programme for the deprived or disadvantaged which has led the W.E.A. furthest into new ventures. The West Lancashire and Cheshire District has consolidated its community work in the Liverpool E.P.A. and launched similar innovations in other areas. Several other W.E.A. districts have followed it into the field of community adult education. Other provision is being made for the mentally ill and handicapped and the physically disabled (both in and outside institutions); prisoners, the unemployed, immigrants, the elderly, women, single-parent families, and alcoholics. Courses are given in welfare and citizens' rights, and training of voluntary community workers. Over half the districts have become involved in the adult literacy scheme.[159] Much of this work can be undertaken without changing the academic nature of the W.E.A.'s provision, but there is doubt about some areas, such as the courses for the mentally handicapped and a good deal of the literacy effort.

It has already been explained that the preponderance of relatively short courses, with no time for them to evolve from an easy introduction to a searching examination of the subject in depth, has led many people in the W.E.A. who particularly value the commitment to the working class or disadvantaged, to advocate the abandonment of high academic standards in favour of more realistic learning goals for the time available. With the greater emphasis now being placed on "Russell-type work" this argument is becoming more common. The 1971-73 National Committee Report stated that a "different kind of educational provision" is necessary, with a greater emphasis on relevance than on academic standards.[160]

The W.E.A. is now faced more starkly than ever before by three alternatives. It can continue to give priority to the work with the disadvantaged by offering a variety of short courses of a generally low academic level. (In some of these pursuits, such as for the mentally handicapped and illiterates, the level must necessarily be extremely low.) Or the Association can reiterate its faith in liberal academic education while recognising that the way such education has developed over the past thirty years or more means it will be predominantly cultural "topping-up" for the middle class educationally privileged. However, the W.E.A.'s evidence to the Russell Committee, stressing its preference for work with the

"disadvantaged," makes it unlikely that this second option is any longer fully open to the Association. It has to some extent been hoist by its own petard in the post-Russell debate on adult education. Until 1976 it was widely assumed within the W.E.A. that the organisation would be able to maintain the level of traditional-cultural classes as well as to pursue its new priorities, but then the Minister of Education warned that the government's overriding intention to reduce public expenditure meant that desirable developments could no longer necessarily be achieved by growth. New proposals would probably have to be met from existing expenditure even if the effect was to give up some present activities. More specifically, the Minister of Education required the W.E.A. to produce "a coherent plan to shift the emphasis away from liberal and academic studies and towards the Russell priorities of work."[161] Apart from revealing an alarming assumption that the new type of work will not be liberal or academic, this statement is a clear indication that the government, as ultimate paymaster, expects the W.E.A. to cultivate the ground (or bear the cross) it was allotted by the Russell Committee, despite the Committee's basic assumption that such development could only occur with a very considerable increase in public expenditure on adult education.

The third alternative open to the W.E.A. is to attempt to reestablish the original objectives of its founders and early pioneers by providing liberal adult education of high academic standard for the working class. As many working class people are still the educationally deprived and socially disadvantaged of the 1970s, this step would correspond with the essential aims laid down in the Russell Report. However, it would require many people in the W.E.A. to learn and accept that such students are quite capable of progressing from their hesitant beginnings to such a standard of learning and sustained liberal studies, given plenty of time. It would also have to be more widely appreciated that the students are more likely to learn something beneficial to them and their aims, whether these are for personal fulfillment or social purpose, from a thorough study of their subject than from a short, superficial glide over the surface. But time is a fundamental essence. This alternative would require a reversal of the recent trend towards short courses.

The W.E.A. faces a rather different choice in its "work in an industrial context." Since the establishment of the T.U.C. educational scheme in 1966, the W.E.A. has either had to fall in with the growing insistence on trade union officer training or see a reduction of its trade union work. The wide-ranging liberal education which was a conspicuous and valuable feature of the W.E.T.U.C. courses is no longer generally possible.[162] The W.E.A. can still promote such courses for trade unionists on a normal fee-paying basis, but as all trade unionists pay

an education levy with their union subscriptions they expect this to finance their adult education without being liable to a further charge. It is difficult to persuade large numbers of them to pay a class fee in addition. The result has been a steady retreat from liberal education in an attempt to maintain the volume of trade union education. In 1973 a W.E.A. working group on trade union education rendered the obligatory lip-service to the continuing need for liberal education but put much greater emphasis on recognising the trade unions' needs to enable their representatives and officials to improve their skills in the performance of their trade union functions. The group's report sought to involve the W.E.A. more in this narrower field of educational training.[163] A review of the work of one W.E.A. district in 1974 stated that that district's participation in trade union education is closely but not wholly related to the T.U.C.'s requirements for "developing and creating skills of immediate practical relevance to its elected lay officials rather than general social education."[164] The W.E.A. is still participating in the T.U.C. education scheme "in its first priority of providing training for work place representatives."[165]

It is true that some individual unions continue to support more liberal courses provided by the W.E.A. for their members, and the W.E.A. is also able to persuade some students and ex-students of T.U.C. day-release courses "to continue and extend their education . . . into wider fields,"[166] but this amounts to very little besides the training courses. The argument for keeping this T.U.C. work is that it is the only way in which the W.E.A. can maintain any real link with the trade unions, and if the Association really means anything by its commitment to working class education, then it must be involved in trade union education. In any case, it is often possible to introduce a liberal element into the narrowest of training syllabuses, or at least to awaken an interest in more liberal education among the students. If the W.E.A. does not take this opportunity, then the T.U.C. will switch all its resources to other institutions. Indeed, it is already doing so to a considerable extent. If this trend is allowed to continue, the W.E.A. will be left with very little work in an industrial context. Against this argument, the W.E.A. must ask itself whether it has forsaken all credibility as a promoter of liberal education for trade unionists by accommodating too readily the T.U.C.'s demands for training courses. This is the dilemma which has to be resolved very soon.

(6) Conclusion

The early pioneers of the W.E.A. were motivated by the knowledge that the social class structure resulted in many working class people never receiving the oppor-

tunity of a university education which came so much more easily to the middle classes. It was intended that the W.E.A., through the tutorial class movement, should do something to rectify such social injustice. While many in the W.E.A. and the Labour Movement saw this as a contribution to the political battle for a "better society" (however they defined the term) by equipping the workers with knowledge which could be utilised in the class struggle, its dependence on state funds meant that the W.E.A. had to maintain a public image of political neutrality. This stance, together with its close association with the universities (and their repeated claim that university objectivity required or implied neutrality), meant there was always an underlying tension between the cultural purists who believed in "real education" from which benefits would automatically flow, and the political realists who certainly rejected political propaganda but favoured education to heighten class consciousness and positively equip the working class to attain social and economic emancipation. In the early days, despite the claims of the W.E.A. nationally to be providing "education for its own sake," the real dynamic of the Association lay in this class education. But gradually, as the W.E.A. became less and less identified with the Labour Movement, the concept of pure culture for personal fulfillment rather than social purpose became more dominant.

At the same time, the dynamic of growth tempted the Association away from a sectional appeal (to workers) to a more general appeal to "the community" and also encouraged it to put more and more effort and resources into promoting less demanding short courses rather than the tutorial classes. This led to growth in student numbers and therefore a feeling of achievement.

At no time did <u>everyone</u> in an association as disparate as the W.E.A. agree upon a policy of abandoning the commitment to the working class or to social and economic emancipation, or to the more demanding and sustained tutorial classes. But over a period of more than half a century there was a gradual drift in that direction.

Within the last two decades, faced with growing competition from the L.E.A.'s and the universities, the W.E.A. has been forced once again to assess its role. The Ashby Committee seriously considered whether the Association had contributed all that it had to offer by the mid-fifties, and it seemed quite possible that the Russell Committee would come to the conclusion that the universities and the L.E.A.'s between them could make all the necessary provisions of adult education. So the W.E.A. made a bid once more to play a pioneering role, defined now as catering for more specifically disadvantaged sections of society rather than in class terms. As a result, the W.E.A. is now involved in a considerable amount of introductory work at a very elementary level.

In principle this is nothing new to the Association, which has always claimed to be prepared to start at the level most appropriate to the students. The danger is that the W.E.A. should attempt to become a voluntary association of amateur social workers committed to provision which is mainly or exclusively remedial, or whose benefits are primarily of a social-welfare nature. There are obviously many worthwhile jobs to be done in the world, but one relatively small voluntary organisation cannot hope to tackle them all, however worthy. The W.E.A. was not founded to promote social welfare, and there is no reason why it should convert itself to this purpose now. Many organisations are better equipped to undertake such tasks.

The other danger, as the W.E.A. gives higher priority to "Russell-type work," is that this should lead to a diminution of its commitment to liberal adult education. In 1975 the National Committee unequivocally declared:

> The Association believes that the continued provision of courses of liberal and academic studies is essential not only as a base of outreach into new fields but not least because of its intrinsic value.[167]

It is vital that the whole membership of the W.E.A. (to say nothing of the Association's paymasters) appreciates that liberal and academic studies are not an alternative to the new priorities. Such studies do not imply an aloofness from the concerns of everyday life, but rather an approach to learning and teaching which is wider than functional training or proselytising. W.E.A. courses do not merely fit people to fulfill a certain role, equip them to carry out a specific function, or teach them to believe a particular view. Although some of these things may result from attending a course, they should do so only after the tutor and students have made an honest and sustained attempt to examine and understand the subject being studied from all possible points of view. Actions and commitment are preferable to a mesmerised indifference stemming from an over-sterile objectivity, but such action or commitment must derive from a wide-ranging analytical study and a deep understanding of all aspects of the subject. The W.E.A. has long been justly proud of this liberal academic approach to adult education. It can maintain the same tradition in the new priority work just as much as it has strived to do in all its past work.

The renaissance of a strong commitment to social purpose within the W.E.A. over the last decade has also offered a rare opportunity to rekindle the dynamic of class education which was so much stronger in the early days. This concept has been blurred in recent debates about the W.E.A.'s role by the use of such terms as "the deprived" and "the disadvantaged" rather than "working

class," and "social responsibility" instead of "social and economic emancipation." But the origins of social and economic inequalities are still to be found rooted in the class divisions of society, and the W.E.A. would be meeting a real need in the middle class, mass-media dominated last quarter of the twentieth century if it undertook once again more specifically to serve the working class and the Labour Movement in an educational capacity.

The W.E.A. does still have a very worthwhile and difficult job to do in promoting liberal adult education of high quality and academic soundness for the working class; to enable all those people who still suffer inadequate education in their childhood to make good their lost opportunities, to the benefit of themselves and the working class. This was the unique contribution the W.E.A. made to society through the tutorial class movement in its early days, and the need for this contribution still exists today.

Footnotes

The place of publication is London unless stated otherwise.

[1]Ministry of Reconstruction Adult Education Committee, Final Report (1919), pp. 9-33; A. Mansbridge, An Adventure in Working Class Education (1920), pp. 1-8; N.A. Jepson, The Beginnings of English University Adult Education (1973), pp. 46-103.

[2]Mansbridge, Adventure, pp. 9-11, and The Kingdom of the Mind (1944), pp. 1-9; B. Jennings, Albert Mansbridge, Eighth Mansbridge Memorial Lecture (Leeds, 1973), pp. 9-12; University Extension Journal (May 1903).

[3]Mansbridge, Adventure, pp. 11-17; Jennings, Mansbridge Lecture, p. 12.

[4]A. Mansbridge, University Tutorial Classes (1913), p. 4, and Adventure, p. 19; G.D.H. Cole, "The Task Ahead," Yorkshire Bulletin, no. 20 (Leeds, Jan. 1925), p. 6.

[5]Mansbridge, Tutorial, pp. 54-5, and Adventure, p. 19; S.G. Raybould, The W.E.A.: The Next Phase (1949), pp. 38-9; J.F.C. Harrison, "The W.E.A. in the Welfare State," in Trends in English Adult Education, ed: S.G. Raybould (1959), pp. 14-17, and Learning and Living 1790-1960 (1961), p. 265.

[6]Letter to S.G. Raybould, 29 September, 1948.

[7]Mansbridge, Kingdom, pp. 1-9; B. Jennings, "The Oxford Report Reconsidered," Studies in Adult Education, vol. 7, no. 1 (1975), p. 53; Jepson, pp. 181-208; University Review (August 1905).

[8]Jennings, "Oxford Report," pp. 55-6; Mansbridge, Tutorial, p. 27.

[9]The Joint Committee of University and Working Class Representatives, Oxford and Working-class Education (Oxford, 2nd edn., 1909), pp. 55-81, 87-8.

[10]Jennings, "Oxford Report," p. 63, and Mansbridge Lecture, pp. 20-21; Mansbridge, Tutorial, pp. 5, 137-8, 145, 166; Central Joint Advisory Committee on Tutorial Classes (C.J.A.C.), 1st Annual Report (1910), pp. 12-25.

[11]Oxford and Working-class Education, pp. 60-66; Mansbridge, Tutorial, p. 38.

[12]Ibid., p. 145; C.J.A.C., 1st Report.

[13]Jennings, Mansbridge Lecture, pp. 5, 11; Mansbridge, Kingdom, p. 6.

[14]Mansbridge, Tutorial, pp. vii, 1, 36.

[15]Mansbridge, Adventure, pp. xv, xvii.

[16]Ibid., p. 54.

[17]Boston Evening Transcript (Boston, 5 April, 1922); The Highway, vol. 16, no. 3 (1924), p. 135.

[18]Jennings, Mansbridge Lecture, p. 30; Mansbridge, Tutorial, pp. 57, 128.

[19]Mansbridge, Adventure, p. 20, and Kingdom, p. 6.

[20]Oxford and Working-class Education, p. 53.

[21]Jennings, Mansbridge Lecture, p. 26; Jepson, p. 51; Harrison, Learning and Living, pp. 264-6, 299.

[22]Jennings, Mansbridge Lecture, pp. 17, 25, and 'Oxford Report," p. 58; J.P.M. Millar and J. Lowe, History of the National Council of Labour Colleges (Unpubl. MSS), ch. 4.

[23]Mansbridge, Kingdom, p. 2.

[24]Ibid., p. 3; H. Pelling, A History of British Trade Unions (2nd. edn., 1971), pp. 123-4.

[25]Oxford and Working-class Education, pp. 47-8.

[26]W.W. Craik, The Central Labour College 1909-1929 (1964), pp. 45-6.

[27]Oxford and Working-class Education, pp. 50, 86.

[28]See, e.g., Camille Riboud's thesis quoted with approval by Mansbridge in An Adventure in Working Class Education, pp. 58-9.

[29]Mansbridge, Kingdom, pp. 5-6, Tutorial, p. 112, and Adventure, p. 22.

[30]Jennings, "Oxford Report," pp. 57-8.

[31]Ibid., p. 62; Millar and Lowe, ch. 1.

[32]Millar and Lowe, chs. 1-2; Craik, pp. 45-81; Min. of Reconstruction Adult Ed. Comm., Final Report, pp. 222-3.

[33]Craik, pp. 127-8.

[34]Millar and Lowe, ch. 3.

[35]Craik, p. 121; Millar and Lowe, ch. 3.

[36]Jennings, Mansbridge Lecture, pp. 29-30; Millar and Lowe, ch. 4; Oxford and Working-class Education, pp. 48-50, 86.

[37]Millar and Lowe, ch. 4; Cole, p. 8.

[38]Harrison, Learning and Living, pp. 290-99; G.H. Thompson, The Field of Study for W.E.A. Classes (1938), pp. 3, 11-19.

[39]Mansbridge, Adventure, pp. 29, 34, 69-72.

[40]Jennings, "Oxford Report," pp. 57-62; Oxford and Working-class Education, pp. 57-8; Mansbridge, Kingdom, p. 24.

[41]Mansbridge, Adventure, pp. 67-8; W.E.A., Annual Rpts., passim.

[42]Ministry of Education, The Organisation and Finance of Adult Education in England & Wales (The Ashby Rpt.) (1954), pp. 13, 36.

[43]Mansbridge, Adventure, pp. 46-52, and Kingdom, pp. xiii-xiv; information also kindly supplied by Dr. D.W. Crowley.

[44]D.O.W. Hall, New Zealand Adult Education (1970), pp. 49-57, 70-72.

[45]Mansbridge, Adventure, p. 53; R. Peers, Adult Education (3rd. Edn., 1972), p. 266.

[46]Mansbridge, Adventure, p. 53.

[47]Ibid., p. 57; Min. of Reconstruction Adult Ed. Comm. Final Report, p. 369.

[48]Jennings, Mansbridge Lecture, pp. 17, 25, and "Oxford Report," p. 61; Mansbridge, Tutorial, pp. 114-5; C.J.A.C., Annual Rpts., passim.

[49]Min. of Reconstruction Adult Ed. Committee, Final Report, p. 359; Hall, passim; Mansbridge, Adventure, p. 52.

[50]Mansbridge, Tutorial, pp. 136-9; C.J.A.C., 1st. Report, pp. 12-25; Ashby Rpt., pp. 3-4; S.G. Raybould, The English Universities and Adult Education (1951), pp. 92-4.

[51]Ashby Rpt., pp. 4-6; Min. of Reconstruction Adult Ed. Comm., Final Report, pp. 112-19, 162-7.

[52]Ashby Rpt., pp. 7-10; Raybould, English Universities, pp. 94-114, and University Extramural Education in England 1945-1962 (1964), pp. 26-30.

[53]Mansbridge, Tutorial, pp. 6, 35, 125; C.J.A.C., Annual Rpts. 1-38 (1910-48), passim; Min. of Education, Education in 1947 (1948), p. 157; Universities Council for Adult Education (U.C.A.E.), Rpt. for 1946/7 (1948), p. 20.

[54]The major sources for statistical information about tutorial classes are the annual reports of the C.J.A.C. (from 1909/10), the U.C.A.E. (from 1945/6), and the Ministry of Education (from 1947); and for other W.E.A. classes, the W.E.A. annual reports. However, these sources rarely agree, partly because of inaccuracies and partly because of the imprecise nature of the material itself and changes in classification of classes and the statistical categories. The information about overseas classes contained in the C.J.A.C. reports until 1941/2 is particularly unreliable, while the W.E.A. annual reports seem inclined to overestimation. A useful note on statistical sources is to be found in Raybould, University Extramural Education in England 1945-62 (1964), pp. 173-7. The discrepancies in these sources make it impossible to give precise figures at all times, or to make exact comparisons of class provision over the whole period, but they do not conceal or invalidate the overall picture of development.

[55]Mansbridge, Tutorial, p. 129.

[56]C.J.A.C., Reports, passim; Raybould, English Universities, appendices 1 & 2, and Extramural Education, p. 37.

[57]Mansbridge, Adventure, p. 36.

[58]Mansbridge, Tutorial, pp. 45, 85-7, and Adventure, pp. 24-8, 69-72; Jennings, Mansbridge Lecture, p. 22; F.J. Gillman, The Workers and Education (1915), pp. 50-54; F.C. Tring, "Theodore Grubb -- Pioneer of Adult Education in Wensleydale 1910-1956," Adult Education, vol. 44 (1972), pp. 303-7; W.E.A. (Yorkshire North District), Annual Reports 3-10 (Leeds, 1916/17-1923/4).

[59]I am indebted for this information to Professor Jennings, who is currently undertaking detailed research of W.E.A. branch records for a full history of the Association.

[60]W.E.A., Workers' Education in Great Britain (1943), appendix 1; Raybould, W.E.A., pp. 3-5, 102-6, English Universities, pp. 118-20, and Trends, pp. 248-51; C.J.A.C. Report, no. 20 (1930); Min. of Education, Education in 1947, pp. 157-8.

[61]Hall, pp. 52-83.

[62]C.J.A.C., Reports, passim, and information supplied by Dr. Crowley.

[63]C.J.A.C., Reports, passim.

[64]Mansbridge, Tutorial, pp. 8, 111-15, 120; Min. of Reconstruction Adult Ed. Comm., Final Report, p. 72; Thompson, pp. 5-6.

[65]See p. 6.

[66]C.J.A.C., 1st Report, pp. 13-14; Min. of Reconstruction Adult Ed. Comm., Final Report, p. 64.

[67]Ibid.; Mansbridge, Tutorial, pp. 145-7, 178.

[68]Oxford and Working-class Education, pp. 66-7; C.J.A.C., 1st Report, pp. 14-15; Min. of Reconstruction Adult Ed. Comm., Final Report, p. 64.

[69]Ibid., pp. 17-18; Mansbridge, Tutorial, p. 152.

[70]E.g., Mansbridge, Tutorial, pp. 38-9; T.W. Price, The Story of the W.E.A. (1924), pp. 34-5; Raybould, W.E.A., pp. 55-6; M. Stocks, The W.E.A.: The First Fifty Years (1953), p. 45.

[71]Harrison, Learning and Living, p. 270.

[72]C.J.A.C., Reports, passim; Mansbridge, Tutorial, pp. 8, 38-9, 73, 120, 160.

[73]C.J.A.C., Reports, passim; Mansbridge, Tutorial, pp. 39, 86; Min. of Reconstruction Adult Ed. Comm., Final Report, p. 66.

[74]Ibid., pp. 65-6; C.J.A.C. 1st Report, pp. 18-20; Mansbridge, Tutorial, pp. 39-42, 149, 154-6; Hall, pp. 52, 58-9.

[75]Min. of Reconstruction Adult Ed. Comm., Final Report, pp. 68-72; Raybould, English Universities, pp. 130-33; W.E.A., Report on Aims and Standards in W.E.A. Classes (1938), pp. 9-11.

[76]Min. of Reconstruction Adult Ed. Comm., Final Report, pp. 61-72; Raybould, W.E.A., pp. 54-74; Hall, pp. 61-5.

[77]Letter from R.H. Tawney to S.G. Raybould, 29 September, 1948.

[78]E.g., Thompson, for the Yorkshire District.

[79]W.E.A., Workers' Education in G.B., p. 3. I am indebted to Mr. G. Brown for drawing my attention to this statement and other evidence of W.E.A. students' aspirations and social/political activities.

[80]Millar and Lowe, chs. 2 and 4; Craik, p. 138; Cole, p. 7; W.E.T.U.C., Report of Workers' Education and the Trade Union Movement (1944), pp. 5-9; W.E.A., Conference Report No. 2: The W.E.A. and the Working Class Movement (1944), passim.

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[83]Hall, p. 60, and information supplied by Dr. Crowley.

[84]Board of Education, Report of the Consultative Committee on Secondary Education (Spens Report), (1938), pp. 87-103; H. Shearman, "The New Education Act," W.E.A. Educational Pamphlet, no. 7 (1944), pp. 4-5.

[85]Raybould, W.E.A., pp. 79-97.

[86]Research being undertaken by Professor Jennings.

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[94]Ministry of Education, Early Leaving (1954), 15 to 18 (Crowther Report) (1959), Half Our Future (Newsome Report) (1963), and Higher Education (Robbins Report) (1963); J. Lawson and H. Silver, A Social History of Education in England (1973), pp. 425-33.

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[101]N.A. Jepson, "Local Authorities and Adult Education," in Raybould, Trends, pp. 101-17; Ashby Report, pp. 28-31, 40-41.

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[107]W.E.A., The W.E.A. 1946-52, pp. 29-32, and Ed. for Changing Society, p. 7; Raybould, Trends, pp. 33-51; Clegg & Adams, passim.

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also contained in the Annual Reports of the C.J.A.C., 1945-58, the U.C.A.E., 1945/6-1973/4, the Ministry of Education, 1947-63, and the Department of Education and Science since 1964. The figures from these various sources do not always correspond exactly, but the discrepancies do not invalidate the general picture. See above, note 54.

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[132]W.E.A., Report of Working Party . . . (1966), pp. 11-13, Report for Branches (1966), p. 1, and Education for a Changing Society, pt. 2, pp. 5-6.

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[136]W.E.A., Report of the Survey of W.E.A. Branches (1976), passim.

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[138]W.E.A., The W.E.A. 1946-1952, p. 35.

[139]W.E.A., Implications of the Ashby Report . . ., p. 4, and Aspects of Adult Education, pp. 3-7.

[140]Research into this transformation of students' interests and motives is currently being undertaken by Mr. G. Brown, who kindly assisted me with this aspect.

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[145]Ibid.

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[147]W.E.A., Unfinished Business. The principal author of this important statement was G.F. Sedgwick.

[148]E. Wilderspin, pp. 7-8.

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[151]Information from North Scotland W.E.A. District.

[152]W.E.A., Report . . . for 1971-3, pp. 31, 37-8.

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[161]Circular from the W.E.A. General Secretary to all District Secretaries, 16 July, 1976.

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[163]W.E.A., Report . . . for 1971-3, pp. 43-48.

[164]Berks, Bucks, and Oxon W.E.A. District, Review of its work (1974), p. 28.

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[166]Ibid.

[167]Ibid., p. 11.

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